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THE NARRATIVE OF A NAVAL NOBODY

1907—1924

By

DOUGLAS FAIRBAIRN

LIEUT.-COMMANDER R.N. (RETIRED)

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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FIRST EDITION . . . 1929

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DEDICATED TO

MY "SHIPMATE" OF THE FUTURE

AND

SHIPMATES OF THE PAST.

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FOREWORD

It is said that everybody has one book in them. I take this to mean that if any man or woman sat down and wrote in simple language and in the utmost sincerity just those things that they had seen and felt and done which seemed to them interesting, we should have a great many more readable books than is at present the case.

Lieutenant-Commander Fairbairn's narrative is a record of this character. I do not suggest that it is the only book he has in him: all who read it will hope that it is the forerunner of many more. But it is the narrative of what he has experienced and observed during what no doubt seemed to him the most interesting years of his life.

The author, invalided from the Royal Navy at a comparatively early stage in his career, has been wise in setting down his personal memories while they are still vivid; "the old order changeth" so swiftly and so remorselessly in this modern Navy of ours. We are so grateful to the few writers who have left us any record of the domestic life of the Navy in bygone eras, that it seems as though there could not be enough books of the type of this "Naval Nobody's" recollections, to preserve for posterity a record of what flickers all too quickly across the screen of the present.

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Few Naval officers, it is certain, will read this book without gratitude to the author for recalling a picture or an incident which in its turn will conjure up other intimate memories. The writer of these lines read, on pp. 75–77, for the first time the story of the passing of his first ship. With somewhat mingled feelings he learned that smoke poured out of the foretop of the *Empress of India* before she sank—that accursed foretop to which he was banished by a doubtless justly-incensed Commander on a chilly November day a quarter of a century ago: and there, alas, forgotten until the going down of the sun.

Its appeal will not, however, be confined to a purely Naval public. Some of the aspects of Naval life so faithfully presented in these pages —the discipline, comradeship and devotion to duty—will give readers in all walks of life a glimpse of something admirable and enduring.

"BARTIMÆUS."

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CHAPTER I

OSBORNE AND DARTMOUTH, 1907–1911

WHAT made me decide to adopt the Royal Navy as my profession I do not pretend to know. Certainly it was not the example of my ancestors, all of whom had been in the engineering profession; more likely it was due to the inspiration of a collection of coloured postcards of warships and liners that I had accumulated at school.

Be that as it may, an autumn day of 1907 found me, dressed in my best Eton suit, and feeling most apprehensive, summoned to appear before a Nomination Board of venerable admirals and professors in London, one among eighty twelve-year-old schoolboys who fancied they would like to "go down to the sea in ships."

Primed by what I had heard and had been led to expect of the ordeal before me, I had memorized (and subsequently forgotten) the numbers of the railway carriage in which I had travelled to London, and of the taxi which had brought me to the place where the interview was to be held. When at last my turn came to appear before the Board I plucked up my courage and went in, fully prepared for the worst. However, the old gentlemen were very kind to me, and each in turn asked me questions on what I afterwards realized was my recently done school-work. I satisfied a

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learned Professor of Geography as to my intimate knowledge of the Tropic of Capricorn, and was then questioned as follows by an expert in English history:

"Who was Queen Elizabeth's father?"

"Henry VIII," I answered.

"Who was her mother?"

Without the slightest hesitation I answered innocently, "Oh! she had eight mothers."

In due course I received my nomination, and passed the necessary examinations. The result of these was first conveyed to me by the ubiquitous Gieve, who seemed so convinced of my ultimate success that he sent one of his suave young gentlemen down to my home outside London to measure me and take the order for my uniform before it was even known whether I had passed or failed.

Thus did I enter the Royal Navy, and fall into the hands of "Gieve's Limited, Naval Outfitters, founded in 1785."

As is not uncommon with one's tailor whose bills are unpaid, Gieve's is a much-maligned firm. For all that, most naval officers will admit that Gieve has the interests of the Service at heart, and that they could "go farther and fare worse." In my own case, on arriving in London on one occasion for a wedding with all my full-dress uniform—except trousers, it was Gieve who gallantly and gratuitously came to the rescue. Thanks to him, I was so resplendent as to be mistaken no less than four times for the bridegroom!

In January 1908, with some sixty other naval

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cadets, very self-conscious in our new uniforms, I embarked in a naval tug at Portsmouth harbour, and was taken over to Cowes to join the Royal Naval College, Osborne. On the way across we were "fallen in" and taught the naval salute. One of the first things to which our attention was called on arrival at the College was the motto emblazoned in large gold letters across one end of "Nelson," the general assembly-hall, "THERE IS NOTHING THE NAVY CANNOT DO." This was a proud boast, but one the truth of which has often since been vindicated both ashore and afloat.

The College buildings comprised a number of bungalows: the dormitories with their reading-rooms opposite were connected by a covered-way. The messroom and classrooms were in stone buildings surrounding the courtyard of the original Osborne House Royal stables.

In these new surroundings, with their unfamiliar naval atmosphere, I was left with a series of very mixed impressions: pride in my new black and white painted sea-chest and its brass name-plate with my name in black letters; a shivering feeling of mistrust of the cold plunge at the end of the dormitory into which we had to jump directly we turned out every morning; and an awful reverence for mysterious beings called petty-officers who used the most incomprehensible nautical terms as if the College were a ship.

The four hundred cadets at the College were divided into six terms, each in charge of a Lieutenant R.N., assisted by a petty-officer and four cadet-captains (prefects). Each term was named

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after a famous admiral, mine being the "Drake" term, or "Drakes." The Lieutenant of the term corresponded to a house-master at a public school: he was responsible to the Captain and Commander of the College for the moral welfare, behaviour, discipline, and instruction in purely naval matters of his term of thirteen-year-old cadets.

As "News" (newly joined cadets) we were mere nobodies in the eyes of the senior cadets. We quickly learnt to give prompt replies in piping voices to the sixth-termers' brusque questions, "What's your name? What's the name of your cook?" or, more abruptly still, "Name, number, tutor, cook?" We looked up to these "gods," who, if no officer were in sight, wore their caps "flat aback," swung their keys on the end of their lanyards, and sported coloured handkerchiefs. Others to whom we owed obedience were the cadet-captains, who wore symbolical gold stripes on their sleeves.

We soon settled down to grow our "sea-legs," and before very long naval discipline and habits of immediate obedience became instinctive. Witness, for example, the dormitory turning-in drill: one gong—Wash your teeth; two gongs—Say your prayers!

Our general education in such subjects as science, mathematics, French, history, etc., was in the hands of a staff of civilian professors and masters, and continued progressively from term to term during our two years at Osborne. Seamanship, with its "knots and splices," "rule of the road," semaphore and Morse signalling, was entirely new to us.

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Equally novel was our engineering instruction in the workshops at Kingston, on the banks of the Medina river above Cowes. The first practical engineering job that a cadet had to do was to remove about a quarter-of-an-inch from a slab of mild steel with a cold chisel and hammer, and then file it flat and square. Many acres of skin must have been taken off our knuckles in achieving this laudable object. In due course we learned the working of lathes and drills, and went through courses in the carpenter's shop and drawing-office. We were also given lectures on the theory of marine steam-engines, internal-combustion engines, and boilers. We went out on the river in the College steamboats, running the engines and stoking the boilers ourselves. Our engineering training was thus thoroughly practical as well as theoretical: it proved of lasting benefit to us later on in modern warships which, with their masses of intricate machinery, require almost as wide a knowledge of engineering as of seamanship. I have a vivid recollection, on the occasion of going to sea in a small torpedo-boat attached to the College, of a shiny red-faced engine-room-artificer of such colossal girth that one wondered how he ever managed to get up and down the small circular hatch leading to the torpedo-boat's engine-room.

A regular course of physical training, including Swedish drill, marching, horse-vaulting, and other gymnastics, was an important part of our instruction, as much from the point of view of instilling habits of discipline and command as of developing our physique. So much for our work.

Our recreations were equally varied and

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strenuous. Cricket in the summer, and football in the winter were the chief of these. Rugby football was not played regularly by all cadets, though it was taught, and more than one future Navy, and even international, player received his first training in "Rugger" at Osborne.

An institution of the winter months was an eagle-eyed petty-officer who used to stand at the end of the path where all cadets going out to play games had to pass under his observation. Every now and then he might be seen to pounce on an unwary cadet with a triumphant, "Mr. ——, you 'aven't got your sweater on"; and back the luckless cadet had to go, sometimes a distance of a quarter of a mile or more, to fetch his sweater.

A pack of basset-hounds under the mastership of the Commander of the College afforded sport and exercise in the winter for those who cared for it, while there were several squash-racket courts, and a recreation-room where one could roller-skate in wet weather. On most evenings there was voluntary instruction in the gymnasium in sabres, foils, boxing, or bayonet-fighting.

At the beginning of a new term, after the comparative inactivity of the leave (no longer called "holidays"), most of us found ourselves very stiff in the limbs until we got into the swing of College life again.

If eating between meals can be termed a recreation, there was an excellent canteen, where such delicacies as nut-cracknels and chocolate bears could be bought with our limited pocket-money of a shilling a week.

Those cadets who were unable to swim were

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marched down to Osborne Bay on summer afternoons, and given instruction in a swimming-tank moored there: I spent many afternoons in this fashion until I succeeded in passing the requisite test.

On Sunday afternoons we were at liberty to go for walks in the country, chiefly in the grounds and woods round Osborne House and the bay facing the Solent. Certain adventurous spirits owned carefully concealed huts in the woods, where picnics were held and such illicit amusements as smoking took place.

Since we were no paragons of virtue, an institution known as "extra drill" served to deter us from such youthful pranks as putting drawing-pins or gum on a master's chair. This took the form of doubling round "Collingwood," the courtyard of the original Osborne House stables, with a "wand" held above one's head for an hour or more on fine afternoons, under the eye of one of the physical-training instructors.

The "Sick-Bay" dealt with those of us who were ill, and "Park House," on the way down to Cowes, provided hospital accommodation for any serious cases. During three weeks spent there at the same time as Prince Edward I was not allowed to be idle, even in bed: one of the nursing-sisters initiated me into the mysteries of crochet and knitting, and before I left I succeeded in making a couple of ragged-looking woollen scarves for deep-sea fishermen.

I was at Osborne with both Prince Edward and Prince Albert: they were treated in exactly the same manner as all the other cadets. On one

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occasion, during Cowes week, I saw King Edward VII, who had come from the Royal Yacht to see his grandsons.

. . . . .

During our first term we went for a short cruise in H.M.S. *Eclipse*, an old second-class cruiser: twenty of us joined her in Cowes Roads on the morning of March 2. It will be noticed that I have spoken of our cruise "*in*," not "on" the *Eclipse*. This is the first lesson in naval customs, and one which often takes a long time for the relatives of naval cadets to learn, so the questions often asked the naval officer, "What boat are you on?" and "Have you ever been on a torpedo," are answered with kindly tolerance. Our second lesson was in the custom of saluting the quarter-deck on going on board, a survival of olden days when officers and men uncovered their heads in reverence to a picture or effigy of the Virgin Mary which used to be found on the quarter-deck.

Living on board a warship for the first time was a novel experience: the smell of tarred hemp, of engine oil, of paintwork; the shrill sound of the bos'n's-mate's pipe, the clanking of the ash-hoist, the creaking of blocks, the humming of electric motors, and rumble of hidden machinery—smells and sounds such as these go to make up the indescribable "atmosphere" of a warship.

We slept in hammocks for the first time, and having once acquired the acrobatic skill of getting in, and accustomed ourselves to having the whole "bed" sway from side to side every time we turned over, we found them most snug and comfortable, and in cold weather very warm. When

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the ship is rolling the hammock swings to and fro, and one can lie in comfort without having to wedge oneself in as one does in a fixed bunk. My hammock in the *Eclipse* was slung near the galley, where I could watch the cockroaches scurrying about on the warm bulkheads.

Eclipse left for Bournemouth soon after we got on board, arriving there in the afternoon. We had spent the day in seamanship and engineering instruction, learning the names of parts of the ship above and below decks. We pulled ashore in a cutter in the evening, and played rounders on the sands, watched by a crowd of local inhabitants. "I had a headache, so I turned in early." So speaks my diary; the French name for that headache is *mal de mer!*

The next morning the ship left for Portland: on anchoring there a salute was fired to the Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet, an incident of great interest to many of us who had never heard a gun fired at close quarters before. We landed again in the afternoon at Bincleaves, near Weymouth, and played games.

Each morning before breakfast we went away pulling in the cutter, our first introduction to service boat-pulling. As a lad of thirteen, little more than five feet in height, I found a cutter's oar very heavy and unwieldy, and I was not the only one whose arms ached, or who caught a crab.

We spent two days at Portland with the Channel Fleet: it was my first sight of warships in company as a Fleet, and, as such, most imposing and memorable. We went on board the battleship

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New Zealand (later re-named *Zealandia*), and were shown round by her officers. What impressed me most was seeing her 12-inch guns worked, all the operations of loading, laying, and training by hydraulic power being gone through for our benefit. I cannot but confess to a feeling of alarm lest the guns should actually be fired: the thought of the noise they would make was very frightening. However, my apprehensions were allayed when we were taken down to the wardroom for tea.

The following morning we sailed for Stokes Bay, near Portsmouth, anchoring there in the afternoon. From the foretop we watched the evolution of anchoring ship; the captain standing on the bridge holding up the small green or red anchor flag, the few tense silent minutes waiting for his hand to drop, the rumble as the anchor slid off its bed, the huge splash as it reached the water, the deafening rattle and roar of the cable running out, and the vibration of the whole ship as the engines went astern. Though I must have subsequently seen a ship come to her anchor many hundreds of times, I can still remember the thrill of that first occasion.

On our last day in the *Eclipse* we were taken round Portsmouth dockyard: we saw warships in dry-dock, the battleships *Bellerophon* and *St. Vincent* being built, and also visited the smithy and foundries. We returned to the College on March 7, after five days at sea in a man-of-war for the first time in our lives, much impressed, and with our sea-legs well developed.

. . . . .

In January 1910, after two years at Osborne,

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began our second two-year period of training at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. Unlike Osborne, Dartmouth is a large brick and stone building of three floors, situated on a hill overlooking the town of Dartmouth and the river Dart.

Life there was lived at express speed. The motto of the College might well have been, "The Navy does not walk": everything was done at the double. We ran between classes, we ran in to meals, and we ran to bed. The average time taken after evening prayers to get from the "quarter-deck" along the hundred-yard-long corridor, up several steep flights of stairs to the dormitory, undress and clear out of the dormitory to the bathroom, cannot often have exceeded three minutes: the final one of those minutes sufficed for undressing, and the last out of the dormitory was assisted to greater speed by a cadet-captain at the doorway with a gong-rope.

Our recreational hours were just as strenuous, and games were compulsory. Each of us had to account for his time by showing up every day what was known as a "log": this was a record of having taken exercise in one form or another. Football, scrum-practice, cricket, nets, a country run—all these were "logs": "W.M.," which denoted having watched a football or cricket match, and having spurred one's term or the College team to victory by vocal effort was also accepted as a "log," though too many "W.M.'s" in a week were regarded with suspicion.

"Rugger" was the regular winter game at Dartmouth. Only the better players were for-

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tunate enough to play on the grounds near the College: the remainder, among whom I was numbered, had to trudge up the mile-long muddy hill to the Norton football grounds, and down again after the game. For those who were not playing "Rugger" a run, either to Black Cottage or Stoke Fleming, constituted a "log." Rackets and "squash," of which I played a good deal, were excellent games for wet weather.

The College beagles, run by the Commander as master, with cadets as whips, gave one plenty of exercise in toiling up and down the precipitous Devon countryside after an elusive hare.

In summer there were cricket and tennis, while the swimming-bath was a popular haunt in hot weather. Many a time on the way back to the College from the playing-fields one would be waylaid by the petty-officer of one's term with his "Mr. ——, what about two lengths?" And into the swimming-bath one would go, to be timed over two lengths of it. Part of our physical training was instruction in life-saving in the water, and most of us managed to obtain certificates of efficiency in this, with copper medals.

As a change from indoor seamanship work we periodically went on the river to learn boat-pulling in service cutters, and often pulled across to the famous old wooden cadets' training-ship *Britannia*, moored opposite Sandquay. On board her, at the order "Way aloft," we went over the mast, up the shrouds hand-over-hand one side, over the futtock-shrouds (inclined at an upside-down angle of forty-five degrees), on to the "top," about sixty feet above the deck, and so

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down the opposite side. It was a nerve-racking experience, but, as budding naval officers, it was a point of honour to go over the futtock-shrouds rather than through the "lubber's hole" in the "top."

An attraction of the summer months were the "blue-boats" at Sandquay: these were a number of Service gigs and skiffs in which we went on the river. On fine Sunday afternoons it was delightful to make up a crew and, armed with paper bags of provender from the Sandquay canteen, pull lazily up Mill Creek, make the boat fast under shady overhanging trees, and idle away the time with a book, or in such desultory conversation as mouthfuls of cherries would allow. After the strenuous week's round such afternoons were a most agreeable change. There were also several "black-cutters" which we used to sail on the river—clumsy craft, but they did not require the exertion of pulling as did the "blue-boats."

The engineering workshops were also at Sandquay, about a mile from the College down a steep path and numerous steps. Our engineering work was considerably more advanced than at Osborne. In addition to work in the machine-shop with big lathes, drills, shaping and boring machines, we worked in the foundry, coppersmith's shop, smithy, boiler shop, and carpenter's shop. In the latter we made wooden patterns which were used in the foundry for making the moulds into which molten metal for the castings was poured. On "Voluntary Sandquay" days we were allowed to make castings of ash-trays, paper-weights, etc., for our own use. In the smithy we heated up iron bars

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to a red heat to make chisels or pairs of tongs: we also worked a steam-hammer, and learnt the difficult art of welding. In the boiler shop we crawled about inside the steam- and water-drums of boilers, hammering at refractory boiler-tubes, and dropping hot candle-grease down them on whoever should be below: if the victim should happen to be one of our two peculiarly blasphemous instructors, we felt amply repaid for our trouble by hearing a flow of abuse as voluble as it was without repetition!

Those cadets whom their engineer-officer considered capable were allowed to take out one of the College steamboats on the river, stoking the boiler and working the engines themselves. By this means one could go up the Dart as far as Totnes, though ordinarily we were obliged to keep below Dittisham. The scenery up the Dart is magnificent, and a trip to Totnes in a steamboat was memorable in more ways than one, when one remembers the number of times the boat ran aground, and the constant anxiety as to whether there was enough water in the boiler to prevent it blowing up, and to provide steam for the engines.

Dittisham was a good Sunday afternoon's walk from the College, and the cottage tea of new bread, new-laid eggs, Devonshire cream, and jam was a fitting reward for the energy expended in getting there. Such farm teas were also obtainable at Stoke Fleming, and at other villages within a few miles radius of Dartmouth. Mention of Devonshire cream recalls the fact that a kind-hearted old lady who lived near Dartmouth left a bequest in

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her will whereby the cadets were given Devonshire cream for tea on two days a week.

Our canteen at Dartmouth was a great improvement on that at Osborne: there was more substantial fare in the form of eggs, potted-meat, buns, sardines, ices, fruit, etc., compared to the sweets and chocolates of the Osborne canteen. On certain occasions buns were provided free, and most cadets of those days will remember the shrill accusation of one of the canteen manager's buxom Devon daughters, "Mr. ——, you've *'ad* your bun!"

How she ever remembered which of the hundreds of hungry cadets had had his free bun is a mystery. The ordering of a certain chocolate delicacy known as a "My Queen" gave facetiously-inclined cadets the opportunity of a little light banter with the canteen manager's wife. A favourite but messy concoction was that of bananas and Devonshire cream squashed up together: on seeing this for the first time one cadet inquired of his friend who was eating it, "Have you eaten it, or are you going to?"

It was a great day when a term of cadets who had left Dartmouth returned there, after having been halfway round the world in the training-cruiser, marched in a lordly way into the canteen, and stood lavish treat to their successors bearing the same term-name as themselves. It was then possible to indulge in the luxury of a sixpenny ice.

Once in each term we had a whole day's leave when we were allowed to wander as far afield as we liked, to any place from which we could get

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back in the day. Three such days do I remember: one when I bicycled to Totnes, got wet through and spent the afternoon in a hotel bed while my clothes were drying; another when I went to Dawlish and rode a horse (most uncomfortably) for the first time in my life; and the third occasion—a Guy Fawkes Day—when I let off fireworks on the sea-front at Torquay.

An "Assault-at-Arms" was held in each summer term: in this teams of cadets competed in horse-vaulting and wall-scaling displays, fencing, boxing, Swedish drill, and similar gymnastic events.

Athletic sports were held in the Easter term, and the only cup I ever won was the second prize in an obstacle-race; and then my own particular friend snatched first place from me after I had led him halfway round the course.

On Saturday nights we danced among ourselves, either to the College servants' band, or to the cadets' band which had been formed. Dartmouth College had a very fine chapel which was lacking at Osborne, and here, until my voice broke, I sang as a treble in the choir: this was an excellent excuse for avoiding the stampede to bed on choir-practice nights. Owing also to being in the choir I took the part of "Kate," a chorus-girl, in the College theatrical production, *The Pirates of Mill Creek*. I found a tight waist, rouged cheeks, and high-heeled shoes most embarrassing and uncomfortable! However, "il faut souffrir pour être belle!"

H.M.S. *Success*, a destroyer, was attached to the College, and in her parties of cadets went to sea

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and made the passage round to Devonport under instruction either on deck, or in the engine- and boiler-rooms. On the occasion when I went out in the *Success* it was very rough, and I was extremely seasick. Being offered Gorgonzola cheese on arrival at Devonport, after several hours' indifference to the fate of the ship, was only an added insult. I did not think that destroyer's name at all appropriate.

. . . . .

It is of interest now, eighteen years later, to record the fortunes of the sixty cadets with whom I joined the Navy in January 1908, and of whom there remain less than half on the active service list. Of twenty-eight lieutenant-commanders, all received war medals, and three the D.S.C. Eighteen have specialized; two each in navigation, gunnery, and signals; one in physical training, six in torpedo, four in submarines, and one in naval flying. The ten remaining are "salt horse" (general service) officers. Four were killed in the war.

Many changes have taken place. Osborne College was done away with after the war, and Dartmouth College has been considerably enlarged. Though the number of entries of cadets has been reduced, the system whereby a boy can join the Navy from his Public School at the age of eighteen, instituted during the war, has proved a great success.

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CHAPTER II

H.M.S. *CORNWALL* TRAINING CRUISE, 1912

On the evening of January 16, 1912, the "Drake" term from Dartmouth joined the cadets' training-cruiser *Cornwall* at Plymouth, for a six months' cruise. H.M.S. *Cornwall* was a "County"-class cruiser of 9,800 tons, armed with fourteen 6-inch and eight 12-pounder guns. The cadets' accommodation consisted of a large after gunroom, a smaller fore gunroom, and a flat outside the latter known as the chest-flat where were our sea-chests, and where our hammocks were slung: in addition, this after portion of the upper-deck on the port side was the cadets' deck.

The First-Lieutenant was in charge of us, assisted by the Cadet-Gunner: there were two Naval Instructors who taught us theoretical navigation, and most of the ship's officers gave us lectures and practical instruction in gunnery, torpedo, navigation, seamanship, and engineering.

The scene of confusion in the chest-flat on the evening of our arrival baffles description. The deck was littered with clothes, books, papers, and instruments; no one knew his way about, or where to find anything or anybody. By nine o'clock, when our hammocks had been slung, and some semblance of order had been restored out of the chaos, came the business of turning in.

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Though we had slept in hammocks for a few days in the *Eclipse* four years earlier we were not yet by any means adept at settling ourselves comfortably in them. So the Gunner's report to the First-Lieutenant before Commander's rounds at ten o'clock, "Cadets turned in, and a few rove end-for-end," was not far from the truth. However, we slept well enough until we were awakened by the Gunner's stentorian voice, "Heave out, heave out, lash up and sto-ow, lash up and sto-ow, heave out, heave out." Then came the struggle to lash up our hammocks: the sheet, blanket, and pillow had to be hidden inside the canvas hammock, and the whole lashed up like a sausage ready to be stowed in the hammock-netting. Our first efforts were hardly praiseworthy.

The ship left her buoy up harbour in the forenoon and, after "swinging" for adjustment of compasses in Plymouth Sound, sailed at two o'clock for Las Palmas in the Canary Islands. Lunch that day was the last meal that I and many other cadets had for three days. We ran into an unpleasant swell in the Channel which made the ship pitch and roll considerably, and accounted for our lack of appetite. Things were little better on our second day out, crossing the Bay of Biscay. Of this day the subsequently published *Cornwall* magazine cynically observes:

"Fairly fine day, and almost a flat calm; result—cadets all seasick, and chest-flat like Thames Embankment on a Saturday night; bathroom denuded of basins!"

Further unconscious humour is provided by the succeeding remark: "Exercised stations for

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abandon-ship . . .," which gave an excellent indication of our outlook on life that first day in the Bay.

The weather on the third day was even worse, blowing hard with heavy seas and rain-storms: for a few hours we eased down to eight knots. Work under such conditions was a labour of Sisyphus, though it went on according to routine. Sitting in a stuffy casemate trying to work out navigational problems in spherical trigonometry with one's books and instruments sliding off the table on to the deck, and the benches and table doing a dance of their own, was no less unpleasant than watchkeeping in the hot, oil-smelling engine-room.

We made our first acquaintance with "fiddles" —wooden partitions clamped to the dining-table to prevent the crockery falling off: personally, I only *saw* the fiddles, and made no use of them, as I spent my meal-times on deck where our kindly surgeon brought us hunks of dry toast and cups of steaming Bovril soup.

The most disagreeable memory of those first three days is of turning out in the mornings and lashing up one's hammock. No sooner had you got a turn or two of the lashing passed and hauled taut than the ship would give a violent roll, and your hammock either swung away from you, or banged you in the face. The smell of oil from the engine-room casings which opened on to our chest-flat was generally enough to complete the discomfiture. Incidentally, putting on one's trousers when a ship is rolling heavily is an art in itself.

On the 20th, our fourth day out, the weather

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improved considerably, and we began to take some interest in our food.

We arrived at Las Palmas, the capital of the Spanish island of Gran Canaria, in the Canary Islands group, at eleven o'clock on the morning of the 22nd, after a passage of 1,450 miles in five days. A national salute of twenty-one guns was fired on anchoring. The ship was soon surrounded by scores of small boats laden gunwale-high with bananas, oranges, and other fruits, in charge of swarthy "dagoes" who chattered vociferously in persistent efforts to sell their produce. After the grey skies and grey-green seas of England, Las Palmas with its bright blue sky, hot sun, and clear blue sea seemed a veritable Arcadia: subsequent visits in later years dispelled that illusion. It is wonderful what charm and romance can be found in the meanest, dirtiest port when it happens to be the first place outside Europe to which you have ever been.

Gran Canaria is of volcanic origin, and rises in irregular peaked formation to a height of about 6,400 feet. From the chief town of Las Palmas a rough stony road follows the Guiniguada ravine, zigzagging up the hillside among squalid yellow, pink, blue, and whitewashed houses with flat roofs. Terraces of date-palms and bananas give place to dusty cactus and prickly-pear, and, as the road winds upward, these in turn are succeeded by bare rocky hillsides where nothing but low scrubby bushes can subsist.

At the top, a thousand feet above the sea, lies the little village of Monte, set among scattered green plantations of sugar-cane, bamboo, and

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bananas: extinct volcanic hills surround it, and on their lower slopes are whitewashed troglodyte dwellings inhabited by a race of beggarly cavemen.

Most of us landed in the afternoon, and were at once beset by hordes of evil-looking Spaniards who wanted to drive us into the town in their "tintanas," rickety hooded carts drawn by broken-down mules. One persevering gentleman followed me for a considerable distance exclaiming, "Six pen-nce, six pen-nce, ah! damn," until I shook him off and boarded a dilapidated horse-drawn tram which took me into the town. Las Palmas is over three miles from the harbour of La Luz where we landed, along a road skirting the shore. This road was about four inches deep in liquid mud, which had splashed up as high as the first-floor windows of the houses. Never have I seen such mud! We paddled through this to the town, where we were again pestered by sellers of "real native drawn-thread work," probably made in Birmingham. We returned on board that evening poorer, but wiser.

Cornwall left Las Palmas on the morning of January 24, on her voyage across the Atlantic to St. Lucia in the West Indies: the last we saw of land for nine days—the longest time in my twelve years at sea—was the snow-capped Peak of Teneriffe, towering 12,000 feet up into the clouds.

The weather was calm and fine, and remained so. Forgotten were the tribulations of seasickness, and we settled down to enjoy the hot sun and deep blue tropical sea. Shoals of flying-fish skimmed over the water, the sun glittering on their transparent "wings." Our Gunner improved

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the occasion by declaring that one had flown in through his open port during the night, and had swum round in his bath until the morning, when he fished it out and had it for breakfast! But it does not do to place too much credence in a Gunner's yarns.

We entered the tropics on the third day out, and the officers appeared in white duck tropical uniform and the cadets in flannels and sun-hats. In the hot weather we slung our hammocks on deck, and on Sunday mornings were awakened by a variation of the Gunner's usual turning-out slogan:

"Heave out, heave out, lash up and stow; sun's shining your eyes out; Holy Communion in the casemate at eight o'clock; heave out, heave out."

Our work continued day by day, "make and mends" (half-holidays) being saved up until we should next be in harbour. We took sights each forenoon to estimate the ship's position, and worked at these and other navigation problems in the casemate classrooms. Those cadets who were doing seamanship kept watch on deck from 5.40 to 6.30 a.m. to learn watchkeeping duties, which included calling the officers. A certain officer who was in the habit of being called at 5.50 each morning left orders one Sunday that he was *not* to be called at the usual time. The cadet on watch that morning, full of zeal, knocked on the door of this officer's cabin, and announced in a loud voice, "Five-fifty, sir. You are not to be called." Exit that cadet amid a shower of boots, and a volley of abuse!

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Our engineering work below in the tropics was too hot to be pleasant; tracing steam and water pipes in the engine- and boiler-rooms, or taking "indicator diagrams" on top of the cylinders in a temperature of about 120 degrees Fahrenheit was most exhausting.

In the dog-watches cricket was played on the quarterdeck, and a canvas swimming-bath of sea-water was a most welcome means of getting cool afterwards. The officers took the greatest interest in us, and joined in our games as well as instructing us in our work, so furnishing that personal relationship between subordinates and superiors which is so essential. When, however, the First-Lieutenant addressed us as "you young gentlemen" it behoved us to look out for squalls.

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After a calm and pleasant voyage across the Atlantic, land was sighted early on the morning of February 2. We passed round the northern end of St. Lucia with Martinique in sight twenty miles away to starboard, and shaped course for Port Castries in the north-western corner of the island.

St. Lucia is one of the most exquisite of the West Indian islands. Its silvery sands are fringed by stately palm-trees, and washed by a calm and limpid sea of sapphire blue, while overhead hangs a burning tropical sun in a cloudless brassy sky. Mere words are entirely inadequate to picture the charm of one's first impression of that lovely tropic isle from the sea.

Rounding the knoll of La Vigie which guards the narrow entrance, we entered the natural fiord-like harbour of Castries, with its low-roofed town

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at the far end, encircled by palm-clad hills. Here, after our long voyage of 2,730 miles, we anchored at nine o'clock.

The ship was soon the centre of a mob of yelling negroes in crazy catamarans, one of which, evidently in honour of our visit, had "CORNWALL" painted on it in crude letters. The nigger-boys afforded us a great deal of amusement in diving for pennies which we threw into the water for them. They were surprisingly adept, and seldom failed to retrieve them. They could be seen in the clear water, a fathom or more below the surface, and after often as long as half a minute under water, up they would shoot to the surface, puffing and blowing, look at the coin they had got, and then stow it away in their cheeks before making another dive. They told us that they rejoiced in such names as Jack Johnson, Black Diamond, and Fitzgerald, and that they each had ten children. In one large boat was a bevy of negresses who all talked at once at the tops of their voices, and flourished greasy cards extolling their virtues as "washerladies."

"I Mother Flora, Mother Flora; I wash for darling little midshipboys; Mother Flora or Mrs. Powlett, coloured cousin of Powlett's in England."

The officers had regretfully to decline a pressing invitation from Mrs. Powlett to a "Dignity Ball."

Dominating Castries is Morne Fortuné, a conical hill wooded to its summit with coconut-palms, plantain, banana, and bread-fruit trees. Between 1660 and 1814 St. Lucia was captured and recaptured by the English and French no

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fewer than seven times, and this "lucky hill" was the scene of much fierce fighting; the old fort and the graves of soldiers of both nations upon it bear mute witness to those days of strife.

The hillock of La Vigie (the look-out) at the mouth of the harbour was another much disputed point of vantage, for from its summit the watchman, were he French or English, kept a look-out for the enemy's fleet, and gave warning of impending attack.

It was an added interest to us that two former British warships of the name of *Cornwall* had fought in those waters in the eighteenth century.

As may be imagined, the native population of St. Lucia is of a mixed type, ranging from the ebony-black negro to the fairer-skinned creoles of French descent; their language is a hybrid mixture of English and French.

My first day ashore is chiefly memorable for the fetid smell of nigger in a tropical climate, an inevitable consequence of the primitive state of filth in which they live in their squalid wooden cabins. We visited the market with its hubbub of jabbering natives, but soon left it for the peace of the Botanical Gardens, where gorgeous butterflies and tiny bluey-green humming-birds flitted in and out among the trees.

Thanks to the hospitality of the Administrator, the tennis-courts at Government House on a hill above the town were at our disposal each day, so we were able to play tennis and drink prodigious quantities of iced lime-squash afterwards. We were also invited to dances there; owing to the heat, these, too, necessitated the consumption of

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iced coffee at frequent intervals. One of my first partners was a dusky creole belle. She and I sat out in the garden under the blazing stars, conversing in bad French, and listening to the ceaseless throbbing of the cicadas in the trees. The spell of a tropical night; the time, the place—and the girl; in a word, Romance! For all that, it was a shattered romance, deliberately dispelled by my mundane suggestion of another drink.

Our instruction in seamanship and engineering continued on board, but the "study" group worked ashore in the old military hospital on Vigie, which was much cooler than sitting cooped up in hot casemates in the ship. One of the jobs to be done by those of us who were under engineering instruction was to light up and raise steam in the picket-boat each morning; this entailed turning out before five o'clock, no great hardship on a still and lovely tropical morning. The cadets doing seamanship then took charge, and were away in the boat until breakfast-time learning to steer, while other cadets ran the engines.

Our days ashore at Vigie were very enjoyable. We used to land after breakfast and work in the forenoon and afternoon, with a picnic lunch and tea. After tea we bathed, the most delightful bathing I have ever done; the water was so warm that we spent two hours or more in the sea, or lying about on the hot sand. Sharks were known to be in those waters, but they never came close inshore. When we were tired of bathing there was a magnificent avenue of coconut palms where we amused ourselves making nigger-boys

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shin up the trees and throw us down the coconuts. One cadet tried his hand at it and, as the official narrative has it, "cabled home for a new pair of trousers"!

Besides the almost daily picnics at Vigie we had a splendid sailing picnic one Sunday afternoon to Cul-de-Sac Bay, about three miles away outside the harbour, and down the coast to the southward; it was here that the British landed in one of their attacks on the island. The sailing-pinnace was anchored off a narrow sandy beach with palm-trees growing to within a few yards of the water's edge, and a party of us jumped overboard and swam ashore. We seized a native canoe which we found hauled up on the sand, and in this ferried ashore the less venturesome members of the expedition, together with the food. While the fire-making and tea-brewing experts were at work the rest of us bathed; one cadet swam out to sea as a bait for sharks, and another succeeded in catching a sea-egg with the sole of his foot. These sea-eggs have long poisonous spikes sticking out of their shells, and once they get into one's foot are very painful and difficult to extract. The tea was dispatched, and the fragments that remained, consisting of half a pot of tea, some used tea-leaves, and half a tin of condensed milk—known as the "hind-quarters of an automatic cow"—these, with a large jam-smeared tin, were offered to a native as a reward for an exhibition of palm-tree climbing which he had given us. At his request all these ingredients were mixed together in the jammy tin, and he then polished off the lot with great gusto. After another short bathe we embarked

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again in the pinnace, and sailed back to the ship, singing lustily.

During our stay at St. Lucia cricket and tennis matches were played against the Castries teams, and the officers and cadets even braved the tropical heat and played "soccer" against the ship's company. The ship was moved alongside the dusty coaling quay, and coaled by native labour, including as many women as men. The coal was shovelled from a heap on the quay into baskets, which the negresses carried with ease on their shoulders up the narrow swaying planks between the ship and the quay-side to the usual accompaniment of shrill chatter.

On the morning of February 15, after a delightful stay of thirteen days, *Cornwall* left for St. Vincent, an adjacent island sixty-two miles to the southward. At the southern end of St. Lucia we passed the Pitons, twin tooth-shaped peaks towering like sentinels 3,000 feet above the sea. This was our last sight of the volcanic mountains and tangled tropical forests of St. Lucia.

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On the same afternoon the ship anchored off Kingstown, the capital of St. Vincent, on the western side of the island. St. Vincent is similar to the other islands of the Windward group, mountainous and thickly wooded, though far less developed than St. Lucia. During our three days there we played cricket and tennis against the local teams. We could hardly believe our ears when we heard that there was a golf-course; when a party of us drove out and saw it we could hardly believe our eyes. The "greens" were only

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distinguishable by being fenced off, and of grass there was none, only a close-growing weed which covered the fairway and greens alike. However, having brought our clubs, we made the best of it, and played round with "twelve little nigger-boys" in attendance—six caddies each!

The chief incident of our visit was the arrival of our first mail since leaving England. The mail-steamer signalized the importance of the occasion by firing a gun when she anchored. To those who know what it is like to be without letters for a month this "feu-de-joie" will not seem unduly demonstrative, though it might seem so if the postman, in the course of his daily round, were to announce his arrival with the post by firing a revolver instead of giving his characteristic knock on the front door. At all times in His Majesty's Navy, in peace or war, at home or abroad, the arrival on board of the mail is an eagerly awaited event, and one which gives more pleasure to the recipients of letters than their writers can ever know. "Has the mail come yet?" and "Anything for me?" are very momentous questions in the life of a sailor separated for so long from his home and kinsfolk.

Owing to a case of yellow-fever being reported at Georgetown, on the opposite side of the island, *Cornwall* left for Grenada early on February 18, a day ahead of programme. Lying between St. Vincent and Grenada are the Grenadines, a chain of small rocky islets thrown up in bygone years by some subterranean upheaval, now crowned with luxuriant tropical growth.

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We arrived at St. George's in the afternoon, and anchored outside the beautiful little land-locked harbour. This is said once to have been the crater of a volcano. With the passing of centuries a cleft has appeared on the seaward side and formed the present narrow entrance, while Nature, in her tireless way, has clothed the once bare crater walls with a mantle of tropical greenery. The old town of St. George's, built originally by the French, clambers up the steep palm-clad sides of this natural amphitheatre from the sun-baked wharves. Not far away, guarding the harbour entrance, is a lofty spit of land with an old grey stone fort perched on the top.

During our three days' stay here the native population was indulging in a carnival; mobs of negroes and negresses paraded the streets in masks and bright-coloured clothes, belabouring one another with whips and sticks, and yelling at the tops of their voices.

A dance was given at Government House for the officers and cadets; we enjoyed it very much, though the heat was intense. The effort of dressing for a dance ashore is enough to make you hot to start with. Delving in the depths of your sea-chest in the crowded chest-flat with the temperature on board somewhere up in the nineties is more than exasperating. If you want a white waistcoat, you fish out a "fig-leaf" bathing costume; and instead of a clean collar you find a shoe-lace. Next you lose your one and only gold front-stud, and when, after a futile search for it, you succeed in borrowing a brass one from some other equally heated cadet, you find the wretched

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thing in your shoe when you come to put it on. Then you hear the shout, "Boat's alongside! Get a move on!" At that moment your shoe-lace breaks, and the one you found when you were hunting for a collar has vanished. Shutting the lid of your chest with a vindictive slam, you dash up on deck without a handkerchief. Down you go again, only to find that you have shut your keys inside your chest. By this time you are in such a state of perspiration and wrath that you do no care whether you miss the boat or not. However, you eventually jump down into it, minus half a shoe-lace and a handkerchief, but plus two left-hand white kid gloves and any amount of superfluous warmth! You enjoy the dance when you get there—especially the iced drinks!

During working hours the opportunity of the ship being in an open anchorage was taken to do some boat-sailing, and each day the cadets were away under sail for instruction.

Leaving Grenada, our farthest south during the cruise, on the morning of February 21, we steamed north past the Grenadines again towards St. Vincent, where the ship carried out 6-inch gun practice. On completion course was shaped for Barbados, where we anchored early next morning off Bridgetown, its capital, in Carlisle Bay. H.M.S. *Melpomene*, one of the cruisers of our West Indian Squadron, was also in harbour.

Barbados differs in many ways from the other West Indian islands we had visited. It is of coral, and not volcanic, origin, while in place of the mountains with their wild luxuriant tropical foliage one finds wide and undulating green sweeps

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of sugar-cane plantations, and brown patches of sea-island cotton. Unlike the other islands, too, Barbados has always been British.

Many of the Barbadian natives have adopted European clothes, in which they present a most incongruous spectacle. A fine sturdy negress in loose cotton frock, a bright bandana handkerchief bound like a turban round her woolly head, is indeed a picturesque sight as she swings barefooted along a dusty road, balancing a huge pumpkin on her head. Her transformation to the black lady of fashion in hat, tight-waisted frock, and cheap American shoes is ridiculous. The only thing that remains unchanged is the broad shining ebony face with its flashing smile of perfect white teeth.

On the shore of Carlisle Bay is a landing-place known as Engineer's Pier from which we used to bathe; the water was at least twelve feet deep, yet so clear that one's shadow could easily be seen on the wrinkled sandy bottom.

Among other amenities of civilization Barbados boasts a racecourse. A two days' meeting was held during our stay, and in one race in which yelling niggers were mounted on donkeys, these animals seemed so reluctant to run that their jockeys were obliged to get off and push!

Our Fleet-Surgeon celebrated his birthday by taking all the cadets and many of the officers—about seventy of us—for a picnic to Bathsheba on the north-east coast of the island. A special train was engaged, and duly boarded at ten o'clock. Having climbed about on the roofs of the carriages, and had our photographs taken sitting on the least

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hot parts of the engine, the *Cornwall* flag was hoisted in the " bows," and off we went.

After a run of about fifteen miles through the sugar-plantations we stopped at Kingston to visit one of the many sugar-refineries. The process of extracting the sugar from the cane was most interesting, if a little nauseating owing to the pungent smell. The long sugar-canes are crushed between revolving rollers which squeeze out the sticky juice; this is mixed with water, and flows away in a muddy stream into huge vats where it is boiled. After several more processes of boiling and refining in the vats, the juice is whirled round in great cylinders, and eventually crystallizes into the form in which it comes to our breakfast-table as brown sugar.

The engine and cadets having, as the P.M.O. would have put it, " taken a little something," we started off again, and after several stops to pick up the *Cornwall* flag, hats, pipes, etc., that had been dropped, came out on the eastern coast of the island at Bathsheba. Here the rear carriage with the stewards and lunch was detached, and the remainder of the train went on to the terminus at St. Andrews. The evolution of changing the train " end for end " was then carried out by the combined efforts of the engine-driver and whole nigger staff of the terminus—both of them. Meanwhile the cadets set their hands to a little shunting. Two trucks found unattended in a siding were each manned by a score of us, and set in rapid motion towards one another. The resultant crash was most satisfying! So were the remarks of the negro stationmaster!

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By this time—to quote the official narrative—the engine had been "buttoned on to the southern end," and as soon as we were all aboard, we returned along the coast to Bathsheba. Arrived here, we found a most sumptuous lunch of turkeys, lobsters, salad, and mangoes laid out on the grass near the beach. Despite showers of rain we more than complied with the P.M.O.'s prescription to "take a little something."

In the afternoon we bathed in the surf, though the coral bottom was anything but soft, and was most painful for surf-riding. The Bathsheba coast is rugged and rocky; a heavy surf rolls in upon it from the Atlantic, and the action of the sea has fashioned the coral rocks into fantastic toadstool shapes.

After tea we started back, and with numerous stops at and between stations to pick up those cadets who had dropped either themselves or their belongings off the footboards of the carriages, arrived at Georgetown. The P.M.O. received a tremendous ovation: we crowded round and gave him three cheers, and sang "For he's a jolly good fellow" twice through *fortissimo*. The station staff turned out to see what all the noise was about.

Dances, tennis parties, a cricket match ashore, and a dance on board brought our week's stay to a close, and the ship left for Dominica on the forenoon of February 29, arriving there at dawn the following day.

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Dominica, so called after the Lord's Day on which Columbus discovered it, is deservedly considered one of the loveliest of the West Indian

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islands. Like St. Lucia and St. Vincent it is of volcanic origin, yet more wild and mountainous than even they. From the summit of Morne Diablotin, the reputed home of the "little devil-bird," five thousand feet high, the island is clothed to the water's edge in a verdant mantle of palm and fern and tangled creeper. Clear cool streams come tumbling down narrow gorges from their hidden sources in the mountains, losing and finding themselves again amid the wild tropical vegetation which covers their rocky sides.

The chief of these is the Roseau river which, after its escape from the confines of the mountains, flows by fertile plantations of lime-trees before finally hurling itself tumultuously into the sea near the town to which it gives its name.

In Dominica there are still to be found pure-blooded descendants of the fierce and warlike Carib race, a more refined and less coarse-featured type than the West Indian negro.

The chief incident of our stay at Dominica was the capture of a shark. One evening while we were at dinner a commotion on deck brought us up to see what was going on. One of three baited cod-lines which had been left trailing over the stern had become half-hitched round the tail of a shark which was cruising near the ship. The combined efforts of the officer-of-the-watch, quartermaster, and bos'n's-mate, with several other willing helpers, were successful in securing the shark, which was triced up by the tail to the accommodation-ladder davit. He was a wicked-looking brute, and took a lot of killing, but rifle- and pistol-bullets finally finished him off. He

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measured over eleven feet in length, and next day was cut up and skinned, an odoriferous performance undertaken by the ship's butcher and staff during Sunday morning church service. Sharkskin is rough, not unlike grey sandpaper, and is excellent for cleaning woodwork; as such it was much appreciated by our commander.

We left Dominica on the evening of March 3, and during the night crossed the Saints Passage between Dominica and Guadaloupe, the scene of the famous Battle of the Saints in 1782. Passing the little island of Nevis two miles to the southward, the ship arrived next morning at St. Kitts, and anchored in Basse Terre roads.

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St. Kitts (more properly called St. Christopher) is an island comparable to Barbados, with the same green sweeps of sugar-cane, the same white roads and trim tidiness. The names of its few bare hills, Mount Misery, Monkey Hill, and Brimstone Hill, are suggestive of its past history of conflict.

Towards the close of the seventeenth and the opening of the eighteenth centuries St. Kitts and the adjacent island of Nevis were in great vogue as fashionable resorts. The discovery of a hot spring on Nevis led to the founding of a spa. One may imagine the well-dressed gallants and their beribboned ladies aping the elegant dandies of Bath and Tunbridge Wells on their way to take the waters.

During our three days' stay we were most hospitably entertained at Government House and by the English residents, with dinners and dances, cricket and tennis matches. The ship sailed on

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the evening of March 6 for Jamaica, and after spending three nights and two very hot days at sea, anchored in Kingston Roads on the morning of the 9th.

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Kingston harbour is a lagoon-like stretch of water about four miles long, protected from the sea by a low spit of land known as the Pallisades, at the western extremity of which is Port Royal. In the latter part of the seventeenth century when the riches of the Spanish Main drew English adventurers to West Indian waters, Port Royal was a place of some importance as a base from which to conduct operations against the Spaniards. With its quays, warehouses, ship-chandlers' stores, and facilities for careening ships, it must have been a hive of activity. In its smoky taverns would have been heard the rattle of dice, the chink of "pieces of eight," and the coarse oaths of mahogany-faced, rum-soaked buccaneers from far-away England. It enjoyed an unsavoury reputation until an earthquake drowned its misdeeds under the sea. Of the Port Royal of those days there remains little more than a small fishing village, basking in the fierce rays of a tropical sun as if in the memories of its bygone days of prosperity.

To port, as the ship passes up the lagoon from Port Royal to Kingston, lies a hot, flat plain, swampy in parts, but mostly covered with the pale green of banana plantations and occasional tobacco fields. Broken only by groves of slender swaying palms, these plantations stretch inland to the foothills of the Blue Mountains which, rising to a

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height of 7,000 feet, form a backbone to the island.

In this setting lies Kingston, the present capital of Jamaica, rebuilt since the earthquake and fire which destroyed it in 1907. Corrugated iron roofs are everywhere, and two out of every three shops seem to be drapers' emporia. One such was proudly styled "The Temple of Fashion," and in the minds of the simple negresses probably was so, meeting as it did their tastes in gaudy coloured bandana handkerchiefs.

Down at the landing-place we were often waylaid by a shrill crowd of negress orange-sellers who, in their efforts to dispose of their fruit, did not stop short of love-making.

"Come my lo-ove, buy my oranges; this basket for one sheeling, only a sheeling."

And then, sorrowfully, as our boat left the jetty, no sale having been effected, "Good-night, darling."

A peculiar feature of the climate is the wind that blows twice a day. At anchor off Kingston one will be sweltering under awnings in a flat calm, without a breath of air, during the forenoon. Then about eleven o'clock a wind starts to blow off the land, until in the early afternoon the sea is quite choppy. This wind is called the "Doctor," as it blows off the malarial swamps out to sea. In the evening it is succeeded by a sea-breeze known as the "Undertaker," which blows from the swamps inland.

About thirteen miles west of Kingston, and joined to it by an uncomfortable little railway, is Spanish Town, where we spent an afternoon.

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Known in the days of Spanish occupation as St. Jago de la Vega, this was the original capital of Jamaica. Now, however, its glory has departed, and it wears a deserted air of neglect and disuse, hot and sleepy in the blazing sunshine.

During a stay of nine days the officers and cadets braved the tropical sun, and succeeded in beating the West India Regiment at cricket, as well as in tennis and golf matches.

Cornwall sailed for Bermuda on the morning of March 18, passing round the eastern end of Jamaica, through Windward Passage between Cuba and Hayti, and so northward. On the second evening we were out of the tropics, and it grew appreciably cooler as we got north. We passed through large patches of Sargasso weed, which recalled stories of ships engulfed in that sea and never heard of again. A four days' passage of 1,180 miles brought us to Bermuda on the morning of the 22nd.

. . . . .

The group of over three hundred islands known as the Bermudas is set in the slowly heaving blue Atlantic, six hundred miles from the nearest land. Outlying coral reefs, but a few feet below the surface, extend treacherous tentacles for seven miles from the shore, while in the waters beyond the ocean attains a depth of three miles.

Through glass-bottomed boats one may see the wonders of this submarine world: branching pink and white coral growths of fantastic shape; anemones, sea-eggs, and sea-plants of all kinds waving in the clear water, with brightly coloured fish darting in and out among them.

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Many of these fish are in the Aquarium: the angel-fish, rainbow-, parrot-, squirrel-, and cow-fish are but a few of the most wonderful colours and curious shapes that can be imagined. Yet others change their colour in a moment while you are looking at them.

In shape somewhat like a hook, the islands are strung together in a chain: but a few yards separate them from one another, and the narrow necks where the sea runs through are spanned by short bridges carrying a road along which one may drive from one end of the islands to the other, a distance of thirty miles.

At the western end of the "mainland" three smaller islands form the point of the hook; here, in Ireland Island, is the naval dockyard. In the curve of the hook is the Great Sound with at least fifty little islets scattered over its surface: two of these form the narrow entrance to the harbour of Hamilton, the capital of the colony, known as Two-Rock Passage.

The climate is sub-tropical, with an abundance of warm sunshine, cooling showers, and refreshing breezes. Birds of brilliant reds and blues sing as they never sang in the torpid heat of the West Indies. The dazzling white roads are often bordered by hedges of red and white oleander, and shaded by palmetto and cedar trees. Overhead is the azure blue of the sky: below are the ever-changing tints of a sea studded with green wooded islets, and darkened by patches of submerged coral reefs and shifting cloud-shadows. The perfume of the Easter lily fills the air, and no noise of factory, no railway, no tram, and no

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motor-car disturbs the peace of these lovely islands.

> "... Nature lavished here
> Her purest wave, her softest skies,
> To make a heaven for love to sigh in."

So wrote the Irish poet, Tom Moore, who at one time lived here.

Bermuda is the oldest self-governing British colony, and its Parliament, dating from 1620, is, with the exception of the Mother-Parliament in London, the oldest law-making body in existence.

The chief importance of Bermuda lies in its being the main naval base of the British Fleet in the western Atlantic, and the headquarters of our North-America and West Indies Squadron. It is famed, besides, as a resort to which numbers of Americans flock each winter, so naturally there is plenty of sport and amusement. There are six golf-courses, tennis, riding, sailing — the Bermuda rig is well known—and bathing in clear, clean water from pink and white beaches of powdered coral, with no danger from sharks.

After coaling on arrival, *Cornwall* secured alongside the dockyard wall on March 23. Two cruisers of the West Indies Squadron were also in harbour, the *Sirius* and *Æolus*.

During the month that we spent lying alongside we managed to get plenty of games. Before breakfast there was either a hockey pick-up, physical-drill, or rifle-drill on the jetty: in the afternoons hockey, cricket, or football matches were played among ourselves, or against teams from the other two cruisers or the Queen's Regiment stationed at Warwick Camp. Tennis

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and golf could only be played on "make-and-mend" days, when we were free to go over to Hamilton. Besides these there were frequent sailing-picnics to Clarence Cove, two miles away on the main island, where we bathed and explored the caves in the cliffs. The Prospect golf-links, on which we used to play, are quite close to Clarence Cove, laid out along the northern coast. Both Government House and Admiralty House are in the vicinity. It was on the road between Clarence Cove and Hamilton that I found the following discriminating notice at the entrance to the drive of a private house:—

> "Ladies and gentlemen will not, others must not, trespass upon this property."

It must not be imagined that our life was all play and no work. Instruction continued regularly for six or eight hours a day. While alongside in the dockyard the navigation classes worked in a house near by on Somerset Island, while of necessity seamanship, engineering, gunnery, and torpedo work were done on board. In the middle of April came the mid-cruise examinations.

At this time we received orders from the Admiralty that the ship was to be back in home waters by June 28 to take part in the annual Fleet manœuvres. Greatly to our disappointment this necessitated foregoing our visits to Charlottetown (Prince Edward Island) and St. Johns (Newfoundland).

The examinations over on the 17th, the next morning found us packing up for four days' leave

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in camp on Ports Island, one of the small wooded islands dotted about the entrance to Hamilton harbour which, at the time of the South African war, had been used as a Boer prison camp. The scene on the jetty may best be described in the words of the *Cornwall* magazine :—

"From 8.30 to 9.45 the jetty was littered with hammocks, ginger-beer cases, trunks, fish-pots, hockey-sticks, pills, saucepans, language, perspiration, and cadets."

By ten o'clock this miscellaneous gear, with sixty cadets and officers, was stowed in the pinnace, cutter, and skiff, which set out in tow of the steamboat for Ports Island. The first thing to be done after disembarking was to "commission" the island: this was done in the approved fashion, a hundred-foot-long service pennant and the *Cornwall* flag being hoisted at a flagstaff on top of a hill in the middle of the island, and a senior officer's burgee and a Red Cross flag hoisted at the officers' bungalow in the camp. Two other bungalows provided accommodation for the cadets. Communication with the ship four miles away was established by a heliograph set up on Flagstaff Hill.

Extracts from the camp log (with apologies to the author) will serve to show how we spent our time—chiefly in bathing and eating.

"10.40. Bickford-Smith and Dean swam round the island.
10.45. Bickford-Smith swam back to the ship for his gym-shoes.
11.20. Burgess-Dean-Smith swam round the island.

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11.50. All hands bathing and generally spoiling the beauty of Ports Island.
12.20. Food . . . oblivion.
12.36. Bickford-Webb swam round the island."

So the sunny day wore on, climbing trees, exploring the island, and bathing, with, in the evening, a sail over to the Bermuda Aquarium on a neighbouring island. Inevitably the day's log closes with :—

"7.45. Dinner. Futile attempt of Bickford-Smith to swim round the world owing to channels being badly lighted.
9.0. Chief Cadet-Captain reports: 'Rounds correct, Sir. Bickford-Smith dry and turned in. Boustead and Greig lost.' Clear lower-deck, spread on a curve of search. After cutting down all the trees on the island we discovered Boustead in the top of one."

And so to bed: the majority of us spread our hammocks on the floor of the bungalow, though a few hardy spirits slung theirs between trees—rashly, for a heavy shower in the small hours of the morning drove them in.

At ten o'clock next morning we set out in a tug with several glass-bottomed boats in tow to see the coral reefs. The Fates were unkind that day. The towing-hawser fouled the tug's propeller, the tug grounded on a reef, and her anchor became firmly wedged in the coral. By the time these misfortunes had been righted it

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was too late to go out in the glass-bottomed boats over the reefs, and we returned to Ports Island by five o'clock. Two minutes later :—

> "Starving cadets had tea, and bulged and bathed."

Then, as might be expected,

> "Kellerman-Brand-Bickford-Burgess-Dean-Smith swam round the island. Acquired no merit."

It was on Ports Island that I smoked my first pipe. Needless to say the cadets were not allowed to smoke, which is tantamount to saying that some of them *did* smoke when suitable occasion offered. With our messman as an accessory before the fact, in that he bought me a pipe and some tobacco in Hamilton, the deed was done after dark one evening, out of sight among the trees. The tobacco was Smith's Glasgow mixture, and it seemed to me rather strong. I did my valiant best, but was unable to finish even one pipeful before the catastrophe occurred. . . . !

The next day was spent sailing, picnicking, and bathing among the islands ; the cadet boats' crews were generally in bathing rig, and as often as not towing in the water alongside the boat. We returned after tea, and at six o'clock :—

> "Livingstone-Stanley-Dean explored another island in bathing rig. Bickford-Smith dived under the island."

Sunday was our last day in camp, and we had a very cheery short service with plenty of hymns under the trees. In the evening we packed up,

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and sailed back to the ship in the dockyard after a very happy four days' leave in excellent weather.

Next morning work started again in earnest. The ship shifted to a buoy off the dockyard in Grassy Bay to carry out aiming-rifle practice in preparation for gunlayers' tests. We spent a week there before moving over to Murray's anchorage, at the extreme other end of the islands, for the 12-pounder and 6-inch firings. These occupied three days. The best individual score of the 6-inch firings was six rounds and six hits in forty-five seconds. This means that the gun is loaded and fired every seven-and-a-half seconds, and that each of the shells fired hits the target, no mean accomplishment when it is realised that the guns are loaded by hand with a shell weighing 100 lbs.

A 6-inch gun's crew consists of nine men; a gunlayer who lays the gun (for elevation), a trainer who trains it for direction, a sightsetter who adjusts the sights for range and deflection, and a breechworker whose duty it is to open and close the breech; the remaining five of the crew are the loading numbers.

Let us now imagine a 6-inch gun's crew in action. On the order "Commence," a projectile is rammed home, the cordite charge pushed in after it, and as the breech is slammed shut the breechworker calls out "Ready." As soon as the sights are on the gunlayer presses the trigger. With a blinding yellow flash and a roar the gun fires and recoils; the breechworker seizes the breech-lever and opens the breech, and into the smoke still issuing from it is rammed

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another shell and cordite charge. So the operation is repeated. Under favourable conditions, when a gun is firing really fast, there is no appreciable interval between the breechworker's shout of "Ready" and the gun going off, as the gunlayer is able to keep his trigger pressed all the time the sights are on, and the last motion of closing the breech completes the electric circuit which fires the gun.

One can often watch the flight of a shell from the muzzle of a gun, see it strike the water in a huge white column of spray, and go ricochetting on beyond: it actually bounces off the water, turning over and over in the air, and making a noise not unlike the puffing exhaust of an express train. I have seen a projectile ricochet as many as seven times after first striking the water.

Our gunlayers' tests were completed by the evening of May 1, and early next morning the ship returned to anchor in Grassy Bay.

One day towards the end of our stay I went over to see the famous "Crystal Cave," which is near the edge of the sea at St. George's, and a hundred feet underground. On all sides are glistening white stalactites hanging from the roof, and stalagmites growing up from clear sea-water which enters by subterranean channels. The biggest of them are as much as ten feet long and a foot thick at the base, tapering to a fine point; others just formed are mere slender threads hanging from the roof. One stalactite formation had grown in graduated size so as to resemble the pipes of an organ, and was lit from behind by electric lights.

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It was a most beautiful sight, and more than worth a bicycle ride of sixteen miles in a hot sun.

Still fresh in my mind after fifteen years is the memory of a Sunday evening spent in a charming house on Somerset Island; a memory of peaceful, home-like surroundings, the very antithesis of those of a warship. It is made up of the fragrance of Easter lilies in a drawing-room, flowered chintz curtains, silken cushions, and cosy chairs, with sunshine flooding in through the open French windows, silver tea-things and willow-pattern china.

Much as one likes life on board there come times when one wants to forget it for a while in the gentle refinements of a home. Wherever the White Ensign flies, and particularly in far foreign waters, boundless hospitality is shown the naval officer. But, grateful as he is for the kindly invitations to dances, tennis-parties, and dinners, he is far more grateful for the informal private hospitality of a "home from home," and the kindness of friends who bid him come in any time he feels inclined when he is ashore. "Come and see us whenever you like: if we aren't in, make yourself at home in an armchair with a book and a pipe." That is the sort of hospitality which is so tremendously appreciated, because it supplies the occasional need of home comforts which are so wanting in a ship of war.

With a last sailing and bathing picnic to Clarence Cove our most enjoyable six weeks' stay at Bermuda came to an end, and the ship sailed for Halifax on the morning of May 6. On the second night we ran out of the Gulf Stream, and,

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in four hours, the temperature fell eighteen degrees to 49 Fahrenheit, an unpleasant reminder that we had left the lands of tropical sun and warmth. Off the coast of Nova Scotia that night, too, we ran into fog: all night long the ship was rolling to a heavy swell, and down below, under closed water-tight doors, the incessant creaking of the bulkheads was broken every two minutes by the long-drawn warning shriek of the syren. The fog lifted next morning, and we reached Halifax in the evening.

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At Halifax is the training-college for the cadets of the Royal Canadian Navy; also, second in importance to Bermuda, a naval dockyard. On our arrival we found H.M. Canadian cruiser *Niobe* in dry-dock. During the previous cruise in 1911 *Cornwall*, in towing *Niobe* off the rocks, had herself run aground on an uncharted rock, and spent some three months in dock at Halifax.

As many of our officers who had been in the ship then were still in her, there were many friendships to be renewed, and one—a matrimonial engagement—to be cemented. This was done in traditional naval fashion within a week of our arrival. As is the custom when a naval officer is married, a garland of evergreens decorated with broad white silk ribbons was hoisted between the ship's masts on the morning of the wedding. The chief-bos'n's-mate who reported to the officer-of-the-watch, "*Wreath* ready for 'oistin,' sir," was probably a widower. Most of the officers, all the cadets, and a large number of our sailors attended the wedding at the Cathedral; a guard

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of honour of officers with arched swords was formed at the door, and the sailors dragged the bride and bridegroom in their carriage through the streets to the reception. A few of the cadets were invited to this and, to quote from a letter I wrote home afterwards,

> "I went, and managed to secure half a glass of 'fizz,' three bits of wedding cake, and two ices!"

That evening a race was pulled in twelve-oared service cutters, over a course of a mile, between the *Cornwall* cadets and the Canadian cadets from the Naval College. After a very keen struggle the latter won by twelve strokes.

The day after the wedding and boat-race was celebrated as a whole holiday. Many of the officers and cadets spent the day trout-fishing in Robinson's Lake. Another cadet and I went into the country on bicycles. We had some difficulty in securing them at first, but eventually met a man who, with a strong Canadian twang, "reckoned we could hire quite good wheels five or six blocks down."

On our first Sunday at Halifax the cadets, seamen, and marines, headed by the ship's band, marched through the town to join the Canadian cadets, seamen from the *Niobe*, and the Royal Canadian Garrison Artillery for church-parade at the garrison church. This, and a few days later, a route-march through the city by the combined ships' companies of *Cornwall*, *Sirius*, and *Niobe*, was a mild (though sometimes necessary) form of self-advertisement which the Royal Navy now and then allows itself.

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Leaving Halifax for Quebec on the evening of May 21, we ran into fog that night. Next morning the ship passed through the Gut of Canso, a narrow strait between Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island about seventeen miles long and two-and-a-half miles wide: a train-ferry runs across it. It was very cold, the temperature being but a few degrees above freezing-point.

Passing between Prince Edward and Magdalen Islands, course was set for the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. Anticosti Island, in the middle of the estuary, was sighted to starboard on the second morning: the river here is nearly a hundred miles wide. Our course took us along the southern shore of the St. Lawrence, where steep wooded slopes run down to the water's edge from the snow-covered heights behind, cleft here and there by narrow valleys ending in little fishing villages on the shore. That night we again ran into fog, and had to ease down; it lifted for a bare quarter of an hour early next day, just long enough to enable us to fix our position, then down it came again with heavy rain as well. By 10.30 it was so thick that we had to anchor until it cleared at one o'clock and we were able to proceed. By then both banks of the St. Lawrence were visible for the first time, and gradually closed in as we steamed through the "Traverses" in the afternoon until, in the evening, we came in sight of the Island of Orleans in mid-river just below Quebec. As we cleared this island the Montmorency Falls, backed by a far-away range of dark mountains, could be seen to starboard. Ahead of us, perched on a lofty promontory, was

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Quebec, and silhouetted against a flaming orange sunset sky were the pointed towers of the Château Frontenac with the Citadel behind. On the opposite shore of Levis the rays of the setting sun, reflected in the windows of a large building, made it appear to be ablaze inside. Delayed as we had been by fog, the ship did not arrive until seven o'clock, when we moored in the St. Lawrence abreast the city. The river here is about three-quarters of a mile wide, and the water runs down from Montreal and the Great Lakes in a sluicing tide of often as much as seven knots.

. . . . .

Quebec, even to those who have never been there, inevitably calls to mind the name of General Wolfe and his victory on the Plains of Abraham. The school-book history of the capture of Quebec was made more real by being able to see, from our anchorage, the steep cliffs up which Wolfe's soldiers dragged their guns in the darkness of that fateful night over a hundred-and-fifty years before.

Adjoining the old battlefield is the Citadel where the British flag now flies. Thence the eye follows along the ridge to where the Château Frontenac, a huge C.P.R. hotel built after the style of an old French baronial hall, rears its imposing pointed turrets on the promontory which divides the St. Lawrence and Charles rivers. Below it steep and narrow streets climb up from the river-side among the tumble-down wooden houses of old French Quebec.

On the evening of June 2, when their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Connaught

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with Princess Patricia arrived by river from Montreal, *Cornwall* dressed ship with masthead flags. The next day, being the King's birthday, the ship was dressed "overall"—not "rainbow fashion," as certain newspaper correspondents are so fond of saying. H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught came on board at eleven o'clock and inspected the ship. Another cadet and I were selected to perform the duties of royal sideboys, standing at the bottom of the accommodation ladder to help His Royal Highness out of his barge.

The Governor-General was given a royal salute of twenty-one guns on leaving the ship. Our Gunner, in his zeal, fired the first gun of the salute when the royal barge was barely clear of the ship, and as she stopped her engines during the salute His Royal Highness spent at least a minute and a half in uncomfortable proximity to the muzzles of the 3-pounder saluting battery. At noon a second royal salute was fired in honour of H.M. the King's birthday, so the Gunner had a busy forenoon. The day was observed as an extra "make and mend," and ten officers and thirty cadets, of whom I was one, had the honour of being invited to a royal garden-party and tea with Their Royal Highnesses at Viceregal Quarters in the Citadel. After dark *Cornwall* was illuminated, the hull, funnels, masts, and yards being outlined in electric lights.

After a stay of twelve days, prolonged on account of the visit of the Royal party to Quebec, the ship sailed on the morning of June 5 for Newfoundland.

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An uneventful two days' trip brought us in wind and rain to our anchorage off a little fishing village in St. George's Bay, on the south-west coast of Newfoundland. Here we found H.M.S. *Sirius*, whom we had first met in Bermuda and subsequently at Halifax. Despite the bad weather, parties of officers set off for salmon- and trout-fishing camps at Grand Codroy and Fishell's rivers: they had fairly good sport, though it was still rather early for the best fishing.

The rest of us who did not fish amused ourselves playing golf on the links at Sandy Point, a course which had been made and was maintained by officers of ships of the North American and West Indies squadron. Strewn over the fields of the golf-course was decaying fish-manure: the smell of it was so indescribably potent that it literally made one gasp for breath.

On board "night-defence" was exercised on most nights in preparation for the forthcoming manœuvres. Torpedoes were also run from a picket-boat during the day, and the cadets carried out firing practice with the 12-pounder guns.

After ten days we sailed for England on the night of June 17. We soon ran into the inevitable fog, which continued until the following afternoon. As is well known, fog is very prevalent off the Newfoundland Banks, where the warm current of the Gulf Stream meets the colder flow of water from the Arctic Sea. Continual reports of the sighting of icebergs were received by wireless from merchant-vessels in the vicinity. Less than two months before had occurred the tragic loss of the *Titanic* through striking an iceberg, so, with

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the double danger of fog and ice, it was an anxious time.

On the second day out the ship was rolling heavily in a strong north-westerly wind and swell. We sighted our first iceberg after lunch: others were seen during the day, with smaller "growlers."

The icebergs of the North Atlantic are "calved" from the glaciers of Greenland. Often several hundred yards in length with cliffs of ice hundreds of feet high, the whole berg is vastly larger than the part visible above the water, which is but a ninth of the complete mass. The general colour is white with streaks of dark green and blue ice. Owing to the melting action of the sun as the berg drifts south small portions become detached from it: these are known as "growlers."

The second night was still hazy; speed had to be reduced to nine knots, and a sharp look-out for ice was kept. A ship generally receives warning of its proximity by a sudden drop in temperature, both of the sea-water and of the air. The last berg was seen at noon on the 20th. The weather continued wet and rough, and the ship rolled heavily. By now, however, seasickness held not the same terrors as when we had sailed from Plymouth five months before: we considered ourselves complete sea-dogs.

Cornwall arrived at Plymouth on the morning of June 25, having taken a week and a night to cross the Atlantic. The cadets were sent on leave the same day, with orders to rejoin the ship at Spithead on July 6.

. . . . .

The manœuvres which *Cornwall* was brought

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home early to take part in were but an aftermath to our cruise abroad, though the preceding Review gave us the opportunity of seeing the 233 units of our Fleet assembled at Spithead.

The ship arrived there on the evening of July 5, when Commander Samson flew round the Fleet in a hydro-aeroplane, quite a novel event in those days. The cadets rejoined the following evening. Two days later Mr. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, came on board to pay us a visit.

At mid-day on the 9th the Fleet was reviewed by members of Parliament, who steamed through the lines in the *Armadale Castle*, following the Admiralty Yacht *Enchantress*. To quote (with apologies) the "New Pepys" of our ship's magazine:—

"Anon come by us the *Armadale Castle*, and as full of Parliament as one could wish to see, but all silent, having luncht well, and did lie about in a variety of attitudes in great content with themselves. Yet some I failed not to see did level glasses at the ships, and had donned caps suitable to the occasion, and these methinks will give trouble at question time by reason of their knowledge of affairs naval."

At four o'clock the Fleet sailed for the bases arranged for the manœuvres, the Red Fleet for the Nore, and the Blue Fleet for Lamlash on the west coast of Scotland. *Cornwall*, one of the Red Fleet cruisers, arrived at the Nore next morning, and spent half the following night coaling.

"12th July. At the Nore, and a mighty

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wicked place for a ship to lie, no land being in sight, and never a fair wench for my diversion." (Our " Pepys " again.)

" War " was declared at 4.47 a.m. on the 13th, and the ship left shortly afterwards. During the next night, off the Dogger Bank, we ran into fog and into a fishing fleet at the same time, with consequent hairbreadth escapes from running down and sinking several steam-trawlers. Our " Pepys " however, seemed more concerned about *Cornwall* being sunk.

" . . . fogge have arisen, and we steaming about at a wicked speed and without lights, and anon all but sunk by a vile trawler, the which do suppose that by virtue of showing a light they may freely cruise about, and as we passed could hear her master's language most malignant and in noe way becoming, which is ever the way of such, and yet did divert me vastly for the moment."

During the afternoon of the 15th we were " in action " with several Blue cruisers and destroyers, with the result that *Cornwall* was ruled out of action, and returned to the Nore the following evening. Here we remained for two days until permission was received to proceed to Torbay, where we anchored on the afternoon of the 19th.

Our final examinations began that day, and continued for the next fortnight, that in boat-sailing being held in Torbay before we left for Plymouth on the 23rd. We paid the customary end-of-cruise visit to Dartmouth College, and lorded it as if we were already midshipmen among

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the new term of "Drakes," our successors at the College, and, in the traditional manner, stood them treat at the canteen.

All good things—and even bad things, such as examinations—come to an end. We left the *Cornwall* on August 3 with real regret. We had lived in her for six and a half months, sailed nearly 13,000 miles in her, twice crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and seen the world as few are privileged to do before they reach the age of twenty.

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CHAPTER III

H.M.S. *MONARCH*, 1912–1915

With two other "Drakes" I joined H.M.S. *Monarch*, my first sea-going ship, as a midshipman on September 16, 1912, in Portsmouth dockyard. After lunch at the "Keppel's Head" on the Hard, we changed at Gieve's next door into our new midshipmen's uniforms—"round jackets" with unmistakably clean white patches on the collars, and dirks, the midshipman's apology for a sword. Strengthened by the moral support of two others as self-conscious as I, and equally afraid lest the unfamiliar dirks at our sides should get between our legs and trip us up, we passed through the main gates of the dockyard. This was the real start of our naval careers; the previous four and a-half years' training was but the prelude to what was to come.

On arrival on board the ship at South Railway Jetty we reported ourselves to the officer-of-the-watch with a salute, and the time-honoured formula, "Come on board to join, sir." The O.O.W. in his Royal Marine uniform of scarlet and gold seemed in my eyes a most tremendously senior officer—a brigadier-general at least. Actually, however, he was nothing more wonderful than a Royal Marine gunner, a warrant-officer. He took us to the Commander, who, after a few

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fatherly words of advice, sent us down to the gunroom, the midshipmen's mess. We were given twenty-four hours to "sling our hammocks" (settle down).

At that time *Monarch* was one of the latest types of warships in the Fleet, a 22,500-ton super-Dreadnought of the *Orion* class belonging to the Second Battle Squadron of the Home Fleet. Her main armament consisted of ten 13·5-inch guns mounted in five twin turrets, and her secondary armament of sixteen 4-inch guns, eight on each side, in fore and after batteries. The officers' quarters were for'ard under the forecastle, the wardroom the starboard side, and the gunroom the port side: the men's quarters were aft, and the quarterdeck amidships.

In the gunroom were about fifteen officers, three of sub-lieutenant's rank, the remainder "snotties" and clerks. The term "snotty" for a midshipman is said to have had its origin in the three buttons on the sleeve of a midshipman's round jacket, placed there to prevent that young gentleman putting his cuffs to such use as that for which a handkerchief is generally intended! Vulgar as it may be thought, every midshipman infinitely prefers to be called a "snotty" than a "middy." The latter term is beloved of maiden-aunts and the like—"Such a *dear* little middy!" But though the "dear little middy" in question considers himself a snotty, in the eyes of the "sub." he is merely a "wart," an impolite name for what is known at a public school as a "fag."

Our senior snotties were of the term next

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above ours, and therefore not so senior as to be terrifying: our lords and masters were the subs., of whom we stood in great awe. We three junior snotties were the "warts," and as such were at the beck and call of the subs. and in a lesser degree of the senior snotties. Each day there was a "duty wart" detailed: his duties were to keep the mess tidy, take messages, fetch the sub.'s pipe—in fact, do anything he was told. The sub. might be taking his lordly ease in a dilapidated basket-chair by the fire with a pair of comfortable slippers on his feet. A slipper would fall off. Instantly a raucous shout of "*Duty Wart!*" would bring that dutiful slave at the double to retrieve and adjust the offending slipper. The sub. would not deign to tell him that his slipper had fallen off—he was expected to notice that, and act accordingly. And should he fail, retribution descended swiftly upon him. It was all done and taken in good part, and though we may not have exactly liked it, possibly it was very good for us.

The naval life is an endless succession of ups and downs. First joining Osborne as an insignificant "new," after two years one became a "sixth termer," veritable young god, only to become again a "new" on going to Dartmouth. And it is the same at sea. From a newly-joined "wart" one rises perhaps to the exalted position of "sub. of the mess," to fall again to be the youngest and most junior member of a small ship's wardroom. As a lieutenant one may be second in command of a destroyer, but if from

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there one goes to a battleship one again becomes "very small beer."

In bad weather, when it was not possible to keep the scuttles (ports) permanently open, warts were told off for "scuttle drill": a wart was stationed at each scuttle to open it at intervals when there was least danger of shipping a sea. Should a drop of water enter the gunroom the sub. dealt with the offending wart in the customary manner in which subs. are wont to deal with warts —generally with a dirk-scabbard. The brass-work of each port, and also the brass stove-pipe, had to be kept polished, and every Sunday morning before "Divisions" and Captain's inspection the snotties went to "brightwork stations."

Should sub-lieutenant A. wish to tell sub-lieutenant B. a story which was not deemed fit for our young ears he would bellow, "*Bread-crumbs!*" at which all snotties would immediately stuff their fingers in their ears. On completion of the story, if the sub. gave audible permission for us to take our fingers out of our ears, woe betide the luckless wight who did so. His ears should have been so tightly stopped as to have prevented him hearing anything, and only a *sign* from the sub. was recognized as permission being given for the state of "Bread-crumbs" to be relaxed.

Gunroom evolutions were performed by the warts for the entertainment of other subs. and senior snotties dining in the mess on the weekly guest-night. These generally took the form of obstacle-races round the mess without touching the deck, or up through the skylight on to the

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forecastle and back through the pantry trap-hatch, or through one of the ship's side ports: the door was the only means of entry which was barred. This was the only night in the week when we dressed for dinner, and a stiff evening shirt seldom survived the night's ordeal.

To turn to the more serious aspect of a midshipman's life on board. My "action" station was midshipman and second in command of "B" turret, with its pair of 13·5-inch guns: the lieutenant in charge was also the officer of my division (the foretopman). My station for "night defence" was in the foremost 4-inch gun battery. Many long hours of the day and night did I spend on watch, either in my turret or in the battery.

The snotties were in general charge of one of the ship's lieutenants, known as the "snotties' nurse"; his duty was to keep a fatherly eye on them, arrange their instruction, and generally supervise their welfare.

Although the midshipmen were part of the ship's complement of officers, their ship duties were so arranged as to conform to a definite curriculum of instruction. While one half were employed on the upper-deck the other half did engineering. The latter consisted chiefly in watch-keeping in the engine- and boiler-rooms: one felt oneself of no little importance when working the manœuvring-valves in answer to the telegraphs from the bridge which ordered the movements of the ship's main-engines. Watch-keeping below was a more pleasant occupation in the cold wet winter months than on fine summer days.

Upper-deck instruction included gunnery,

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torpedo, navigation, and seamanship. We continued our studies in theoretical navigation under a Naval Instructor, for whose ministrations threepence a day was deducted from our meagre pay. How we grudged him those threepences, and when, towards the end of the month, our finances had run so low that we could not afford to go ashore, what caustic remarks we made on the subject! Under the "N.I.," too, we took sights at sea, and from our observations of sun or stars laboriously estimated the ship's position.

While all upper-deck midshipmen took part in whatever general ship's work was in progress, particularly in general-evolutions and action-drills, certain of them worked under the specialist officers in the gunnery, torpedo, or navigation departments. In their aptitude for the work of the particular department to which they were attached may well have been sown the seeds of their ultimate choice of the branch in which, as lieutenants, they elected to specialize in later years.

Monday mornings in harbour were devoted to "general drill," when evolutions such as "Out nets," "Out bower anchor," to mention but two of many, were performed, ships competing against one another to finish first.

As midshipman-of-the-watch at sea one had valuable opportunities of acquiring first-hand knowledge of practical navigation and "Rule of the road" under the officer-of-the-watch. As well as writing up the deck-log a no less important duty of the midshipman-of-the-watch at night was that of providing cocoa for the O.O.W. But

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perhaps his most important duty of all—at any rate in the opinion of the O.O.W.—was calling the reliefs. A great deal depended upon the tact and firmness with which he roused a heavily sleeping watch-keeping officer from his warm bunk on a cold, wet winter's night.

A knock on the cabin door: no answer.

"Three-forty-five, sir." Again no answer.

Once more, and still louder, "*Three-forty-five, sir.*"

"Whasserwerrer like?"

"Cold and raining, sir."

"Damn! . . . all right."

If the snotty saw the cabin light switched on before he left he might reasonably expect to find the officer of the morning watch dressed when he returned to report, "Five minutes to four, sir." However, accidents *have* been known to happen, and if the relief was late it was the snotty's fault, and he got cursed by both officers for not seeing that the relief he had called was properly awake.

A midshipman's harbour watch-keeping was merely a question of running the ship's routine under the officer-of-the-watch: this entailed reporting to the Commander or O.O.W. such routine affairs as concerned them in time for them to be carried out "with the bell," seeing boats were alongside the gangway at the times ordered, and a hundred and one similar duties.

Another harbour duty of the upper-deck midshipman was that of running boats. Each of the ship's duty-boats, whether steam picket-boat, launch, pinnace, cutter, or whaler, was commanded by a midshipman, who went away in

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charge of his boat whenever she left the ship. During most of my first winter at sea I was in charge of the second cutter, a twelve-oared, 32-ft. boat which, either under oars or sail, seemed, to my mind, to do *all* the ship's boat-work. No sooner had I returned, thoroughly wet, with my face encrusted with dried salt spray, from taking letters to the flagship in my cutter, and settled down to lunch, than a knock at the gunroom door would herald the appearance of the bos'n's-mate in dripping oilskins with his hated "Second cutter's called away, sir." No lunch, and another wetting, probably only to fetch a telegram for Ordinary-seaman Bloggs, whose aunt had got measles. On the day of our Commander's promotion, if I went once for a congratulatory telegram for him, I must have gone a dozen times. How I loathed his having been promoted by the end of that day! On one occasion I had sailed up Portsmouth harbour from Spithead to land the stewards, and was given a telegram to bring off. Ten days later I found it in the pocket of my oilskins, and most unwisely produced it. The sub. "dealt with" me. "Mastheading" was another form of punishment for erring snotties; it was preferable, though, to be turned over to the sub. to be dealt with, as his method was much warmer than spending a couple of hours aloft meditating on one's misdeeds.

Taking a cutter away under sail in wintertime with a strong south-westerly wind blowing over Portland harbour was no pleasure, though in the summer such boatwork was delightful.

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A duty which often devolved upon the indispensable second cutter was that of bringing off beef from Portland Camber at six o'clock on a cold, dark winter's morning: there is something peculiarly distasteful in the sight of raw red meat at such an hour before breakfast.

Embarking libertymen at Berehaven in the south of Ireland was more amusing. The so-called whiskey which they drank ashore made them distinctly noisy, and often troublesome. They would insist on bringing into my boat provisions for their messes, in the shape of live ducks or fowls, and as often as not, then and there wringing their necks or cutting their throats. The hubbub of uproarious singing libertymen and squawking fowls was most effectually quelled by my coxswain with the boat's tiller.

The snotties started their day in harbour at about 6.30, when they were rudely awakened by the senior snotty who came round violently shaking their hammocks. Ten minutes or so later we would muster on deck, shivering and but half awake, for physical-drill under a petty-officer physical training instructor. This over, we went below to bath and dress, known in the Navy as "cleaning." (Whenever it is necessary for a sailor to change from one "rig" to another he is "piped to clean" into whatever "rig" is ordered: he even "cleans" into coaling rig.) Having therefore "cleaned," we spent another half-hour at signal instruction, which generally took the form of reading or making semaphore or Morse-flag messages. Breakfast was at eight o'clock, "Divisions" at nine, and then com-

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menced the day's work of instruction. The only snotties who were excused the early morning activities were those who had been on duty after ten o'clock the night before: they were entitled to a "Guard and steerage" which allowed them to lie in until 7.15. So much for a snotty's life in the Fleet.

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Looking back on that pre-war period, the chief impression that remains is of its deadly monotony. Day after day, week after week, and month after month, gunnery and torpedo training continued unceasingly, in harbour and at sea, by day and by night. With Germany building a large Navy, and the ever-present threat of war between Great Britain and Germany, such preparation was, of course, inevitable. For all that, it became very wearisome, and had it not been for the week-end leave which was granted to officers and men when ships were at Portland or dockyard ports we should have become very stale with a surfeit of gunnery and torpedo.

Within a few days of my joining the *Monarch* we left Portsmouth, our home-port, for Portland, and after a week there arrived at the beginning of October at Berehaven in Bantry Bay (S.W. Ireland). Portland and Berehaven were our chief bases for gunnery and torpedo practices. We spent three weeks at Berehaven while the first trials of Sir Percy Scott's fire-control director, which was fitted in our sister-ship *Thunderer*, were carried out. Briefly, this director is a means by which a ship's armament is directed and controlled from one master-position aloft. It is not

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necessary for the target to be visible from the guns themselves: by following pointers in each turret, controlled by the director, the guns are automatically laid and trained on the target, and a salvo of five 13·5-inch guns fired by pressing a single trigger in the director-tower aloft.

On completion of these tests we returned to Portland and, at the end of the month, after a week's strategical exercises, were ordered to Portsmouth to carry out a test of the new floating-dock recently installed in the dockyard there. For this purpose the ship was completed to full peace-stowage of coal. The test was of thirty-six hours' duration, and consisted in lifting the ship, then displacing over 25,000 tons, until she was high and dry, and finally flooding the dock and refloating her. *Monarch* was the first ship to use this new dock, and the test was entirely satisfactory. It was transferred to Invergordon within two months of the outbreak of the Great War, and proved invaluable there for docking H.M. ships, obviating the risk of their having to be sent to southern dockyards for that purpose.

The remainder of the autumn was spent at Portland and Berehaven carrying out the unending gunnery and torpedo exercises, as well as the annual musketry practices on the Portland rifle-range.

Christmas leave was not given until the end of December, so we spent Christmas Day in the ship at Portland, the snotties celebrating the occasion in their usual boisterous fashion. We had a photograph taken of ourselves grouped round the dinner-table, wearing paper caps, and

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smoking long "churchwarden" clay pipes. At that festive meal the gunroom messman so far forgot himself as to omit to provide us with "Digby chicks" as the savoury. Possibly there had been no stray kippers or pieces of toast left over from breakfast that morning, which may account for his otherwise inexplicable oversight.

Between January 1913 and the middle of March we were occupied with gunnery or torpedo exercises either at Berehaven or Portland. The ship refitted at Portsmouth during the latter half of March and in April, proceeding to Lamlash, in the Isle of Arran, on May 1. While there we played a good deal of golf on the small nine-hole course. It is an excellent thing in the Navy to be able to play golf, as there are many places which ships visit where golf is the only recreation. Our stay at Lamlash was varied by a short visit to Rothesay in the Isle of Bute. On our return to Lamlash we saw the new Japanese battle-cruiser *Kongo* doing her full-speed and gunnery acceptance trials in the Firth of Clyde.

On June 10 we returned to Portland again for ten days, after which a portion of the Fleet, including *Monarch*, assembled at Spithead for a review in honour of the French President, M. Poincaré, on June 24. Ships were moored in review order and were dressed overall with flags. At 11.15 the Prince of Wales arrived at Portsmouth to welcome the French President, and was received with a royal salute of twenty-one guns from the ships and shore batteries. This was the first occasion on which the Prince of Wales had acted in his official capacity as H.M. the

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King's representative. The French Dreadnought battleship *Courbet*, the armoured-cruisers *Gloire*, *Marseillaise*, and *Condé*, with six destroyers, arrived at Spithead at noon, and fired a national salute of twenty-one guns on anchoring. After this salute had been returned by the shore-battery the British Fleet greeted the French President with a royal salute, and the flag-officers went on board the *Courbet* to be presented to him. This exchange of official courtesies over, he proceeded up Portsmouth harbour and was received on landing by the Prince of Wales, who accompanied him to London.

We returned to Portland two days later, and on July 3 the Fleet carried out an "exhibition" tactical exercise which was witnessed from the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress* by Mr. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, and M. Baudin, the French Minister of Marine.

On July 16 the Fleet assembled for the annual manœuvres, and for this purpose was divided into two forces, Red and Blue. The Red Fleet, commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir John Jellicoe in the *Thunderer*, was the attacking force, composed of 117 units including four fast and two slow transports for raiding and landing purposes. In addition there was the old *Hermes*, carrying three hydro-aeroplanes: I believe this was the first occasion on which aircraft were used to co-operate with the Navy. The Blue Fleet of 230 units, with a preponderance of cruisers and destroyers, was the defending force, commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir George Callaghan in the *Neptune*. Sir William May was chief umpire in the *Euryalus*.

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Red territory extended round the south-eastern coast from Dungeness to Yarmouth, the Red Fleet's main base being at the Nore. Blue territory embraced the remaining coasts of the British Isles with Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands as the main base of the Blue Fleet. Red's object was to effect a landing in Blue territory somewhere on the east coast. This was considered to have been achieved if a transport were able to remain unmolested at the selected landing place for four hours after landing the 1,000 men carried, this being the time estimated to represent landing a further 5000 troops. Although Red was on the offensive it was his aim to avoid a general action with the more powerful Blue battlefleet.

Substitute Germany for the Red Fleet, and Great Britain for the Blue Fleet, and the inner significance of the manœuvres is apparent.

"War" was declared between Red and Blue at five p.m. on July 23. At eight o'clock next morning Red succeeded in landing a force representing 24,000 troops at Hull. At 6 a.m. on the 26th Red was again successful in landing 12,000 troops at both Blyth and Sunderland, though in a simultaneous attempt to effect a third landing in the Humber the two slow transports were "torpedoed." During that day the Red battlefleet was shadowed by two Blue battle-cruisers, and engaged them at intervals. No contact was made between the opposing battlefleets. Thus Red had succeeded in putting some 48,000 troops ashore in Blue territory without serious loss to either Fleet.

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At five a.m. on the 28th the Admiralty signalled "Operations completed," and the two Fleets concentrated at their bases in readiness to commence the second stage of the manœuvres.

Active operations were resumed, under certain modifications, on July 31. Red's main object was to establish a base in the Shetland Isles, the raid being carried out by one of the fast transports, while at the same time the remaining transports were to make feint raids at three different points on the English and Scottish coasts. In this instance Red failed to achieve his objective, and the manœuvres ended next day with an action between the battlefleets.

Monarch returned to Portland on August 3, and spent the next three weeks working up for her 13·5-inch battle-practice firing which took place on the 25th.

Two days later we arrived at Spithead to give manœuvre leave, sailing again in the middle of September for our autumn practice area in the Moray Firth. Cromarty was our base during that month, though, in order not to waste time in entering and leaving harbour, we anchored each night either off Helmsdale, Portmahomack, or Dunrobin Castle, the Duke of Sutherland's place near Golspie, according to the state of the weather.

Cromarty at that time boasted an embryo naval air-station with three experimental machines—a Borel monoplane with a Gnome engine, a Sopwith tractor biplane with an Anzani engine, and a Maurice-Farman biplane.

On October 6 the Fleet put to sea for five days' tactical exercises: these were witnessed from the

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Enchantress by Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Colonel Seely, the Secretary of State for War. *Monarch* was obliged to remain in harbour owing to the serious condition of an able-seaman who had been operated upon on board two days previously for appendicitis. In order that we should not be idle the ship's company were landed in heavy marching order for a sixteen and a-half miles route-march to Rosemarkie and back.

On October 14 *Monarch* was detached to Portland to prepare the old battleship *Empress of India* to be fired at by the Fleet. Towing trials of the ship were carried out in order to decide whether the firing should take place with her under way or moored. Bad weather caused considerable delay, and it was not until November 4, a fortnight after the commencement of the trials, that we were able to moor the ship in the firing area, about twenty miles south of Portland Bill. Previous to the firing the ship's scuppers were plugged and her decks flooded with water in order, as far as possible, to prevent her burning. *Monarch* was stationed about a mile from the *Empress of India* to watch the firing.

The light-cruiser *Liverpool* was the first ship to open fire with 6-inch and 4-inch guns at a range of about 6,000 yards (3 sea miles). She was followed by the *Thunderer*, who carried out 13·5-inch "director" firing at 8,000 yards.

By this time the *Empress of India* was on fire inside: there was also an upper-deck fire abaft the foremast, and a dense volume of smoke was

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pouring out of her foretop. The attendant tugs closed her and endeavoured to extinguish the flames, but with little success.

Orion was the next ship to fire, at about the same range as her sister-ship *Thunderer*, and by the time she had finished the *Empress of India* was burning furiously, and was much battered about. Flames could be seen leaping up from inside the ship, and showed through shot-holes in her side. Her upperworks were badly damaged, and it was curious to notice that several of her casemate guns were bent.

It was evident that the fires had gained too firm a hold for the tugs to be able to extinguish them, so it was decided to let the ship go on burning, and continue the firings as quickly as possible. Accordingly *King Edward VII* fired next at 7,500 yards, and several of her 12-inch projectiles holed the *Empress of India* below the waterline under her stern. Owing to the bad afternoon light and the possibility of the ship sinking individual firings by *Neptune*, *Lion*, *Hercules*, and *King George V* were postponed, and the squadron-firing hurried on. In this practice *Neptune*, *King George V*, *Thunderer*, and *Vanguard*, steaming in line-ahead, opened fire in succession at a range of about 8,000 yards with their 13·5-inch and 12-inch guns: as soon as ships found the range they broke into independent firing.

To us in the *Monarch*, stationed near the *Empress of India*, it was a magnificent spectacle. From the bright yellow flashes of the firing ships four miles away, one turned to the battered *Empress of India* to watch the shells strike their

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target, and burst in yellow-red flashes and clouds of grey smoke. When two or more shells burst on board at the same time the ship was completely obscured by smoke, from which flying splinters of twisted ironwork—one such "splinter" a large sheet of funnel-plating—were thrown in the air, higher than the *Empress of India's* masts, by the force of the explosions. Though *Monarch* was a mile away a splinter landed within a hundred yards of her. Besides the huge clouds of smoke from the bursting shells the ship was at times completely hidden by the mast-high columns of water thrown up by shells falling short.

By the time the squadron-firing was over the hull of the ship was riddled with shell-holes, and she was settling low in the water by the stern. Her port funnel had been shot away, as had been several cowls, derricks, and such top-hamper. She was also burning fiercely inside both fore and aft. The tugs again endeavoured to extinguish the fires, as it was wished, if possible, to tow the *Empress of India* into harbour for examination of the damage done by the firing. However, it was evident that she was too badly damaged to remain afloat much longer.

As soon as it was dark *Monarch*, *Britannia*, and *Assistance* anchored close to the ship, and switched their searchlights on to her. At 6.25 her bows lifted out of the water, her stern submerged, and with a rumbling noise of guns falling out and loose gear being thrown across the deck, she rolled completely over to starboard until she was floating bottom upwards. In this position she remained for about three minutes, and finally

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at 6.32, slid slowly under stern first, and sank in about 25 fathoms, clouds of steam rising from the spot as the sea-water came in contact with her fires. It is always an awe-inspiring sight to see a ship sink, and the sinking of the *Empress of India* in a darkness lit by the white beams of our search-lights was no less so than usual.

During the remainder of November we were at Portland doing our annual musketry courses in cold wet windy weather, which was hardly conducive to good rifle practice.

On December 4 *Monarch* arrived at Spithead to give Christmas leave, preceded for the mid-shipmen by a week of gunnery lectures and 13·5-inch turret gun-drill. We returned again to Portland after the leave, and spent the first fortnight of 1914 in harbour, exercising landing-parties and doing harbour drills.

On January 17 we left for Vigo, in the province of Pontevedra in north-western Spain. Vigo is a large land-locked harbour, protected by islands at its mouth from the force of Atlantic gales. The town is built on a hill rising from the south-eastern shore of Vigo Bay, and is as dirty as are most Spanish towns. Sardine-tinning is an important industry, though to watch the process is hardly likely to improve one's taste for sardines. In many of the shops one can buy ladies' chain-bags of the very finest mesh. In those days the Casino was a great attraction, though one which was not permitted to gunroom officers—officially, at any rate. Walking in the country round Vigo we were continually pestered by small Spanish boys, and even women, for money. They would

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follow us for miles, whining "I-say, un pen, un pen," unceasingly, until, in exasperation, we turned on them and drove them away with our walking-sticks.

After five days at Vigo we left for Arosa Bay, another deep inlet in the coast farther north, and anchored off the small town of Villagarcia.

At the end of January was held a most strenuous cross-country race for the midshipmen of the Fleet. Inland from Villagarcia is a rocky eminence called Serpent Hill, some 1,500 feet high. At the summit is a large iron cross with a plate set in the rock commemorating the British officers and men who lost their lives in the wreck of H.M.S. *Serpent* in 1890.

The start of the race was about two hundred feet below the summit, and the course to be followed was a stiff climb among the rocks to the top, round the iron cross, and thence down to the finishing line four miles away on the beach near Villagarcia. It was very rough going indeed, and after the inevitable weeding out of the competitors during the initial climb, more depended upon knowing the best route to follow down to the beach than anything else. In this *Monarch's* snotties had a great advantage, as during the week before the race we had been ashore day after day climbing up Serpent Hill and finding the shortest way down. At various points on our chosen route our officers had posted themselves to spur us on, and see that we kept to the proper course. The result of the race was a veritable triumph for *Monarch's* midshipmen, all of whom, sixteen in number, had entered for the

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race. Out of 142 starters we took first, third, fourth, and (myself) fifth places; also seven out of the first ten, and thirteen out of the first twenty places. The whole sixteen of us finished in the first forty. We were publicly congratulated by the Commander-in-Chief, and the general signal that he made to the Fleet was framed and hung in our gunroom. Our Captain also "cleared lower deck," and congratulated us all before the whole ship's company. We were a very swollen-headed lot for some days.

The Fleet left Arosa Bay on February 2, *Monarch* arriving at Portsmouth two days later to be taken in hand for her annual refit. During six weeks in the dockyard the ship was fitted with Sir Percy Scott's "director" fire-control system. After a fortnight's leave the midshipmen went to the gunnery school at Whale Island for a fortnight's course in field-training, hydraulics, and practical "stripping" of guns; this was followed by a further two weeks' course in H.M.S. *Vernon*, the torpedo school.

Leaving Portsmouth on March 23, we joined the Fleet off St. Alban's Head for two days' exercises. *Iron Duke* had been commissioned, and was in company with the Fleet for the first time as the Commander-in-Chief's flagship. On completion of the exercises we returned to Spithead to pay off on April 6, at the end of the ship's first two-year commission. To celebrate this the sailors gave a "Ship's Company dance" ashore in Portsmouth. These functions are similar to a "tenants' ball," and to the officers invited the complicated ceremony of such dances as the

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"Valeta" and "De Albert" is a source of great perplexity. On this occasion our snotties attended in force, and were not at all popular when they brought in the local Hippodrome chorus, whom they fetched from the stage door after the performance was over.

Twenty-four hours after paying off *Monarch* re-commissioned with a new Portsmouth crew for further service in the Second Battle Squadron. After giving Easter leave we sailed for Bantry Bay, anchoring on the morning of April 23 off Bantry. We spent two weeks there to "shake down," and exercise drills with our new crew, also calibrating our guns in conjunction with tests of the newly-fitted "director" fire-control installation. A dance in the waiting-room of Bantry railway station helped to prevent life from becoming too serious. History does not relate the remarks of the stationmaster when, next morning, he found one of his goods-trucks in a different siding to that which it had occupied the day before.

The ship left for Portland on May 7. During the following month hardly a day passed without its gunnery practices either in harbour or at sea. Little did we realize how soon was to come the war for which those endless gunnery drills and firings were unknowingly the preparation.

On June 13 a French squadron consisting of the cruisers *Marseillaise* and *Amiral Aube*, with two destroyers, six torpedo-boats, and six submarines, arrived at Portland on a visit. The First Lord of the Admiralty in the *Enchantress* acted as official host, and entertainments were

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arranged for the French officers and men, both in the British Fleet and ashore.

Five days later *Monarch*, with her sister-ships *Thunderer*, *Orion*, and *Conqueror*, left for a cruise to West-Country ports. We arrived at Penzance the next afternoon, and anchored in Mounts Bay. While there we had the opportunity of seeing over St. Michael's Mount, a quaint castle perched on a rocky island; although at high tide it is cut off from the shore, at low tide carts can drive across a sandy causeway between the Mount and Marazion on the mainland. In olden days St. Michael's Mount was a Benedictine monastery.

In celebration of the King's birthday ships were "dressed overall" and a royal salute fired at noon; *Monarch* and *Orion* also "manned and cheered ship." A battalion of seamen and marines was landed, and marched with the band from Newlyn to Penzance and back. We were open to visitors in the afternoon, and a party of two hundred school-children who came off to the ship were each presented with a bun and an orange. By the time they left, the ship looked more like Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday than a warship.

On June 23 we left for Newquay, arriving there the same evening. During our six days' stay we had some very enjoyable golf at the Newquay Club, but our visit was marred by a fatal accident on board which resulted in the death of three men. This necessitated the cancellation of our projected visit to Clovelly, and we returned to Portland at the end of the

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month, paying a short visit to Falmouth on the way.

. . . . .

At that time a portion of the British Fleet was on a visit to Kiel, and other of our ships were at Kronstadt. On June 28 occurred the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria at Serajevo, an event which, as is well known, led to the Great War.

It had been decided in March that, instead of the annual Fleet manœuvres, a test mobilization of the entire Home Fleets should be held in July. This accordingly was commenced on July 15; all reservists were called up, and the Third Fleet ships manned and prepared for sea. On completion of the mobilization the Home Fleets assembled at Spithead and were reviewed by H.M. the King on July 17 and 18. That great armada of 460 battleships, battle-cruisers, cruisers, destroyers, torpedo-boats, submarines, and other auxiliary craft stretched in ordered lines as far as the eye could see, the whole length of Spithead and the Solent. It was the grandest manifestation of sea-power in the history of the world, and one which is hardly likely again to be equalled. The King was received by his Fleet with a royal salute and steamed in the Royal Yacht slowly up and down between the lines, each ship, "dressed overall" with flags, manning and cheering ship as he passed. At night the sky was lit by the beams of hundreds of searchlights, and ships were illuminated.

The Fleet sailed on the morning of the 19th and, with aeroplanes and seaplanes flying over-

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head, steamed past the Royal Yacht off the Nab: it took six hours for all those squadrons and flotillas, at fifteen knots, to pass.

During the following week the Fleet was engaged in exercises at sea. The Third Fleet was due to be disbanded on the 27th; this had in fact already begun when, on the 26th, the European outlook had become so grave that the demobilization was countermanded. On that date *Monarch* was at Portland and, with the remainder of the Second Battle Squadron, was under orders to proceed to Berehaven the next day for gunnery practices. In view of the serious situation and the probability of war, these orders were cancelled and all officers and men recalled from leave.

Early on July 29 the Fleet left Portland for an unknown destination; it was a dull misty morning, and, until we were out of sight of land, we steered to the south-westward, course subsequently being altered up Channel. The object of this was to deceive any enemy agents who might have been expected to report the fact of the Fleet having sailed into thinking that we were going *down* Channel, and possibly up north by the west coast of the British Isles. The day was spent in preparing the ship for war; wire hawsers were stowed below armour, extra tackles put on the yards, lyddite shell fused, and warheads shipped on torpedoes. War routine was adopted, ammunition was provided at the guns, and torpedo-tubes were loaded.

The Fleet passed through the Straits of Dover after dark that night—a twelve-mile-long line

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of forty-one darkened ships, twenty of them "Dreadnoughts." It was thought that the Germans might possibly make a torpedo attack on our Fleet before the actual outbreak of war, so all guns were kept manned and loaded from dusk. One of the lasting memories that I have of the war is of being on watch in the battery at night; pitch darkness except for shaded blue lights shining over the breech of each gun on the polished metal-work; the smell of burning slow-match provided for lighting pipes and cigarettes; round the guns the dim figures of their crews muffled in thick "lammy suits," their subdued hum of conversation mingling with the sound of the wind and the sea. These sights, sounds and smells leave an indelible impression of those early days of the war at sea. A magazine of that time thus describes "Night Defence":—

"And it is worse by night than by day. For the men have to sleep beside their guns. Frequently, too, they have to *blacken their faces* so that they shall become part of the darkness." (The italics are mine.)

No attack was made on passage through the Straits of Dover or in the North Sea, and the Fleet arrived at their war-base, Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands, on the evening of July 31. The next three days were spent at anchor coaling, provisioning, and completing the preparation for war. We sent some of our boats ashore, and after a while the beach near Scapa Pier was piled high with ships' boats, cabin and mess furniture, and such superfluous woodwork as would be likely to cause fires in action. This was even

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carried to the extent of ripping up a great deal of the wooden deck planking which, when the likelihood of immediate action had passed, had to be replaced. A lot of paint was scraped off the bulkheads in order to lessen the danger of fire in action. Each night certain ships kept their 4-inch guns manned, and torpedo-nets were got out before dark as protection against attack by submarines or destroyers on the Fleet anchorage, which at that time was not strongly defended.

On August 4 Sir John Jellicoe relieved Sir George Callaghan as Commander-in-Chief of the British Fleet. The Grand Fleet, as it then came to be known, put to sea at 8.30 that morning. At 11.37 p.m. the long-expected wireless message was received from the Admiralty :—

"Commence hostilities at once against Germany."

The following gracious message was received by the Commander-in-Chief from H.M. the King :—

"At this grave moment in our national history I send to you, and through you, to the officers and men of the Fleet of which you have assumed command, the assurance of my confidence that under your direction they will revive and renew the old glories of the Royal Navy, and prove once again the sure shield of Britain and of her Empire in the hour of trial."

We remained at sea for three days, patrolling between the Orkneys and the Norwegian coast with the object of closing the northern exit of the North Sea to German shipping. During this patrol certain battleships carried out practice

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firing at German trawlers captured the previous day: the firing was good, and they were sunk—an ironical fate indeed.

Most of the remainder of August was spent at sea patrolling the northern part of the North Sea, with occasional "sweeps" to the southward; the Fleet was seldom at Scapa for longer than a day or two to coal and replenish with provisions and stores. We gradually came to realise that war was to be as it has since been described—"a period of intense boredom, punctuated by moments of intense fear"; though we had not as yet experienced the fear, we had had a foretaste of the boredom. Our expectations of a Fleet action were not to be so speedily fulfilled as we had hoped, and we resigned ourselves to long days and nights of dull watch-keeping, enlivened by occasional alarms of submarines having been sighted. To me, hidden away in the battery, these alarms were most provoking, for I could see nothing and do nothing but wait for orders down the voicepipe from the bridge to open fire at an object which I could not see.

We were greatly cheered by the news of the engagement in the Heligoland Bight on August 28, when our battle-cruisers and light-cruisers sank the German cruisers *Mainz*, *Koln*, and *Ariadne*. When we next saw the *Lion* at Scapa, three days after the action, we were most interested to see her "wounds," our first visible evidence of naval warfare.

By the end of August, owing to the numerous reports and alarms of the sighting of enemy submarines in the vicinity of the Orkney Islands,

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and even inside Scapa Flow itself, it became evident that Scapa, in its then incomplete state of defence, was unsafe as a Fleet base. Accordingly, during September, while the necessary materials for the construction of net defences to the entrances to the harbour were being obtained from southern dockyards, the battle-fleet made use of Loch Ewe on the west coast of Scotland as its base for refuelling, ammunitioning, storing, etc.

On the morning of September 10, while in the southern part of the North Sea in support of a raid by our light forces into Heligoland Bight, the *Nottingham* reported having sighted the enemy battlefleet. This, we hoped, was "Der tag"! The ship was cleared for action: canvas bridge-screens were taken down, and such woodwork as we still had left was broken up and stacked on deck. The decks were flooded, and the hoses left running: the gunroom and wardroom were also flooded, the tables and chairs overturned, and books, papers, and coats flung down into the water. An enthusiast in the stokers' fire-party excelled himself by turning his hose on to and inside our £99 pianola! (This was later taken to pieces and laid on deck to dry in the sun, after which it continued playing.) This was indeed war, and when we came down to lunch and found our mess the scene of confusion described, *our* enthusiasm was not damped, though everything else was. We took the opportunity to put on clean underclothes (hygienic for wounds), armed ourselves with first-aid packets, and sat about on top of our gun-turrets in the sun waiting for

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the High Sea Fleet. However, by four o'clock no further news of the enemy had been received, so we were obliged to defer "Der tag" to another day.

On September 15, with ten other midshipmen in the *Monarch*, I was promoted to the rank of acting sub-lieutenant: not only was this four months before we were ordinarily due to have been promoted, but, owing to the war, we avoided having to do our sub.'s courses at the gunnery, torpedo, and navigation schools, and the consequent harrowing examinations. Thus I received my commission and the right to wear a sword; the Commission itself, signed by H.M. the King in facsimile, arrived later. We happened to be in harbour at Loch Ewe when we heard of our promotions, and celebrated the occasion by a very rowdy evening in the gunroom. Though the eleven of us had not one single new gold stripe between us, we tore the white midshipmen's patches off the lapels of our coats, and turned up at dinner with some sort of gold stripe on each sleeve: my pair of stripes came off the jacket which the officer of my division wore for coaling. The thrill of first wearing a gold stripe on your arm must be known to be appreciated.

In the later half of September, while it was known that the High Sea Fleet was in the Baltic, the Grand Fleet remained in northern waters, and used the west coast of Scotland lochs as temporary bases. Early in October the Fleet was patrolling between the Shetlands and Norway to cover the crossing of the Canadian Expeditionary Force convoy. German submarines

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continued to be sighted round the Orkneys: five were rumoured to have penetrated into Scapa Flow itself (then deserted by the Grand Fleet), while others had been sighted as far round as the west coast of Scotland, and even in the Irish Channel. It was not until this time that most of us realized how far from their bases German submarines could operate.

During this month *Monarch* was detached from the Fleet to dock at Portsmouth, and we spent five happy days there, back in civilization after weeks of the boredom of war. Scapa Flow is one of the most bleak and desolate places that can be imagined, and, until we reached Portsmouth, most of us had not been ashore for six weeks, nor had we set eyes upon anything that wore skirts! Many of the officers had their parents down for the few days that the ship was there, and most of the men's homes were at Portsmouth or in the neighbourhood.

We rejoined the Fleet about the middle of October at Loch na Keal, on the west coast of the Island of Mull, going up outside Ireland on account of submarines having been reported in the Irish Channel. Loch na Keal is similar to Loch Ewe, a harbour with a narrow entrance, large enough for two or three squadrons, though not for the whole battle-fleet. As the German Fleet was known to be still in the Baltic, we remained at Loch na Keal for a week, the longest period in harbour since the beginning of the war. Boom defences were improvized across the entrance to the loch, and in addition to the guardship anchored there, destroyers and picket-boats

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patrolled the entrance night and day. As an added precaution a proportion of the 4-inch guns was kept manned at night, and many were the picnic parties of cocoa, biscuits, sardines, etc. that were held in the gun-control positions and batteries in the small hours of the night, with the ship darkened, guns loaded, and net-defence out.

We, as well as folk ashore, had our spy rumours. One night a suspicious light was seen twinkling ashore, and an armed boat's crew was sent to investigate it: this "spy" proved to be a harmless Scottish farmer walking with a lantern among the trees between his house and the cowshed where one of his cattle was sick. Another still more exciting rumour fizzled out in even greater bathos. One of the natives ashore averred that he had seen an aeroplane land on a neighbouring island: a search of this island revealed nothing more spy-like than a loaf of bread, a pot of jam, and the remains of a picnic party's fire in a cave. The post-mistress and her family who were in charge of the local post-offices were all reputed to be spies; this, however, did not unduly concern us so long as we received our mails regularly.

After a week's rest at Loch na Keal we put to sea on October 26 for battle-practice off the north of Ireland, and it was during the forenoon of the following day, while getting into position for firing, that the *Audacious*, one of our latest Dreadnoughts, struck a mine. She sank early the next morning, all her officers and men being saved. This was due to the good seamanship of H.M.S. *Liverpool* and S.S. *Olympic*; both these ships

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endeavoured to take *Audacious* in tow in very heavy weather, and the *Olympic*, when warned by Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly of the danger of getting too close to the sinking ship, made the very fine signal :—

"Consider my 1,200 civilian lives of no value to the country compared to those of 700 fighting men, and shall therefore render assistance on my own responsibility."

On account of danger from mines and submarines the battle-practice was abandoned, and we put into Lamlash (Isle of Arran) for two days. While there we received warning to expect aerial attack, as a Zeppelin was reported to have been sighted over Belfast. From Lamlash we went to Lough Swilly (Northern Ireland), where we found the remainder of the battle-fleet. S.S. *Olympic* was also there under a guard of three picket-boats, which patrolled round her night and day to prevent any communication with the shore, in order that the news of the sinking of the *Audacious* should not leak out. It is well known that Germany heard of this in America long before it was admitted in England.

After two days at Lough Swilly we put to sea again, and carried out the postponed battle-practice, firing at a rock off the west coast of Ireland, after which we returned, on November 8, to Scapa Flow.

During this month we made one "sweep" down the North Sea without coming into contact with any enemy forces. The time in harbour was spent in improving and making permanent the anti-submarine net-defences at the entrances

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to the harbour: this entailed long, cold days in open boats which few of us will forget. The first snow fell on November 14, and gales were frequent.

In December the Fleet settled down to the monotony of waiting in harbour for long periods until the day when the High Sea Fleet should see fit to come out and face our ships. A kindly committee in London sent us supplies of fresh vegetables, and the Army and Navy Stores stocked S.S. *Borodino* with supplies of frozen produce from which the Fleet stewards could make purchases. An emergency squadron was detailed to keep steam at short notice, and a regular programme of ships exercising under way inside Scapa Flow was started. Trawler and picket-boat patrols were instituted on the boom- and net-defences at the two principal entrances in Hoy and Hoxa Sounds. These were provided in turn by ships of the Fleet, and were very cold, uncomfortable duties. On trawler patrol we did our own cooking; personally, my highest flights of imagination in cookery did not go beyond bacon-and-eggs, or chops with fried potatoes, and these were not particularly tasty. On picket-boat patrol we were content with cold food, and whiled away the daylight hours in rifle or machine-gun practice at any suitable floating objects.

This state of tedium continued until December 15, when the Second Battle Squadron, as emergency squadron, put to sea very hurriedly in the middle of the night, always an exciting proceeding on an inky-dark night with half a gale blowing, as on this occasion. Information had been

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received from the Admiralty that four German battle-cruisers, five light-cruisers, and a number of destroyers were out in the North Sea: the Second Battle Squadron in conjunction with our battle-cruisers, light-cruisers, and destroyers from southern bases was to try to bring them to action, the southern forces getting between the enemy and his base, while we approached them from the northward. The next morning (December 16) we went to "action stations" at seven o'clock, well provided with food for the day. One of the incidents of that day which I remember is the sight of the head and shoulders of Lieutenant-Commander —— emerging from the conning-tower, devouring a hard-boiled egg for his breakfast. My gun-turret was embellished with three small silk White Ensigns and a Union Jack: the ship herself was flying three White Ensigns aft, and a Red Ensign for'ard.

Soon after we had gone to "action stations" we heard that our destroyers had been in action with German destroyers, but had been driven off by their cruisers. At 9.15 a.m. came the news that the German battle-cruisers had been shelling Scarborough, and that their light-cruisers had bombarded Hartlepool. At this time we were to the southward, steaming north-west at full speed (20 knots) towards Scarborough, then about 120 miles distant. Our battle-cruisers left us at 10.30 and went on ahead at full speed. The day had started clear and fine, but as the morning wore on the weather became dull and misty. Shortly before 12.30, when I was down below snatching a hasty lunch, the "action alarm"

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was sounded. I left my cold mutton and hurried back to my turret to find the guns being loaded with armour-piercing lyddite shell, the guns' crews in the minimum of clothing and most excited: I, too, prepared to do battle in a vest and trousers.

A German light-cruiser and eight destroyers had been sighted in the mist on our starboard bow (north of us) steaming fast on an opposite course to our squadron. We only caught the briefest glimpse of them, and though we had turned towards them immediately they were sighted, the mist had swallowed them up again before we could open fire. This was the only occasion during the war when I was in sight of the enemy; even so I did not see them personally, and it was an added disappointment not to have been able to have engaged them.

We remained at "action stations" during the rest of the day, the guns loaded and in instant readiness, but heard no further news of the enemy beyond the fact that the High Sea Fleet had put to sea, evidently in support of their raiding squadron, and were estimated to have been over 150 miles from us when we had sighted the German cruisers.

In the light of subsequent information it was evident that, but for the low visibility which enabled the German raiding squadron to slip in between us and our battle-cruisers twenty miles farther north, they would hardly have escaped. Their light-cruisers may have been within range of the Second Battle Squadron for perhaps as long as five minutes at a distance of

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12,000 to 15,000 yards (6–7½ sea miles), while their battle-cruisers must also have been within range (9–10 miles), though out of sight in the mist behind the German light forces. It was the wretched misfortune of the misty weather which prevented our engaging them. On the other hand, with their superior speed, we might not have been able to have brought them to action before they had led us in chase of them towards the High Sea Fleet, only 150 miles away. Without the support of the remainder of the Grand Fleet, which was unable to leave Scapa until four p.m., our squadron of six battleships and four battle-cruisers would have fared badly at the hands of the whole German Fleet.

Under the circumstances, therefore, it was useless for us to attempt to pursue the enemy, and we continued on a northerly course for the rest of the day to rendezvous with the remainder of the Grand Fleet at nine o'clock next morning, when we turned and steered S.S.E. in the hope that the High Sea Fleet might still be at sea. The Second Battle Squadron was detached later, and returned to Scapa to coal on the morning of December 18, the rest of our battle-fleet remaining at sea.

Christmas Day was spent at sea in support of the successful attack made by seven naval sea-planes on the German Fleet base at Cuxhaven. We received kind messages of Christmas greeting from Their Majesties the King and Queen, which, with the sprig of holly decorating my turret, and the fact that many of the "matelots" might have been seen smoking "cigars with bands on,"

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were the only features which distinguished this day from any other day of war at sea with the Fleet. We returned to Scapa from this covering sweep at six o'clock on a pitch dark morning, in such a gale as one could hardly stand up against, and while manœuvring to avoid one of the guard trawlers in Hoxa Sound entrance were run into from astern by H.M.S. *Conqueror*. Considerable damage was done to our stern, and to *Conqueror's* starboard bow, both of which necessitated dockyard repair. Temporary repairs were effected, and we sailed on December 29 for Devonport down the west coast outside Ireland. We ran into heavy weather, but fortunately the temporarily repaired bulkheads aft withstood it well. An enemy submarine was reported in the western part of the Channel shortly before we should have been due there, and, on orders from the Admiralty, we put into Queenstown for two days, eventually reaching Devonport on January 4. Examination of the ship in dock revealed the fact that, besides our damaged stern, several of the port bow compartments were badly strained and leaking. We spent thirteen days in the dockyard, during which leave was granted, and we again had an opportunity of seeing our families. The repairs were complete by January 17, 1915, and we sailed to rejoin the Fleet at Scapa on January 20.

Three days later the Grand Fleet put to sea for a " sweep " down the North Sea ; this resulted on January 24 in the Dogger Bank action, when our battle-cruisers and light forces engaged similar enemy forces, sinking the German battle-cruiser *Blucher* and badly damaging two others, the

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Derfflinger and *Seydlitz*. Our battle-fleet remained in support, though they were not in sight of the enemy. We returned to Scapa at dusk next day.

During February the battle-fleet remained in harbour. As a change, and to provide rest and recreation, squadrons at Scapa were sent in turn to Cromarty Firth, the Second Battle Squadron being the first to go. We arrived there on February 24 to find the countryside covered with snow. It was far colder at Invergordon than at Scapa : the latter, though farther north, derives a certain amount of warmth from the Gulf Stream. We spent three weeks at Invergordon, and found it a very pleasant change from Scapa : the men were able to go ashore and play football, or "wet" (*sic*) their appetites, while the officers played football, hockey and golf.

In March two more "sweeps" of the North Sea were carried out. Opportunity was taken on such occasions of the battle-fleet being at sea in company to exercise battle-tactics ; ships and squadrons were also detached to carry out target practice. During the second "sweep" on the morning of March 18, H.M.S. *Dreadnought* rammed and sank the German submarine *U* 29. This incident was not without its moral effect upon officers and men, who often spent long hours on submarine look-out duty without ever catching a glimpse of a submarine's periscope. It showed the necessity of continual vigilance, and that a submarine could be avoided, if not rammed and sunk, by a sharp look-out being kept, and prompt action taken.

Further "sweeps" during April and May

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failed to bring any part of the German Fleet to action. The weather at Scapa in April was very bad, gales being of frequent occurrence.

During the long periods spent in harbour at Scapa—"c/o G.P.O., London"—much was done by working parties from the big ships to improve the recreational facilities of that cheerless spot. Football grounds for the men, and a nine-hole golf course for the officers were laid out on Flotta Island. To land after lunch, and put one's ball down anything between thirtieth and fortieth in order on the first tee, and then wait an hour or two before one could drive off, was no uncommon occurrence. On board, we were all thrown together a good deal, both wardroom and gunroom officers, between whom relations were most friendly, and officers and men also. The attractions of the "beach" were not very strong, and in the winter, when it was dark by four o'clock, there remained many hours to fill in with either work or play. For exercise on board we played deck-hockey, "medicine-ball," or simply doubled round the upper-deck so many times. A number of exceedingly ambitious theatrical entertainments of the "*revue*" kind were produced, *Monarch's* "UC2" being the first of these. As the war progressed, a special ship, S.S. *Ghourko*, a sister-ship of the previously mentioned cold-storage ship *Borodino*, was fitted and utilized as a floating theatre. Any ship wishing to give a performance would get the *Ghourko* alongside, rig the stage and scenery, and present their entertainment without having to unrig everything hurriedly if the Fleet were ordered to sea. A

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regular programme of cinema shows was given later on. The progress of the war on the Western Front was followed by amateur military strategists with large maps and flags on pins, and lectures were given on the war, and on various other subjects. By these and other means—never forgetting interminable gunnery and torpedo drills—we whiled away the long days of waiting in harbour for the German Fleet to come out.

Early in May two forces, each consisting of two light-cruisers and eight destroyers, were employed in intercepting and searching ships, particularly trawlers, which were often met with in the northern area of the North Sea through which the Grand Fleet passed on its periodical "sweeps" to the southward. It was suspected that such vessels might be sending reports of movements of our Fleet to the enemy. For the purpose of boarding and taking into harbour for examination any such suspicious craft met with, a number of junior officers with prize crews were lent to the light-cruisers engaged on this duty. I was one of several sub-lieutenants lent to the light-cruiser *Phaeton*.

The first ship examined by the *Phaeton* was a Dutch steam-drifter into which I, with a prize-crew of one petty-officer and four men, was decanted in the middle of the North Sea. Encumbered as we all were with cutlasses, and I with a revolver as well, boarding that drifter from a whaler in an oily North Sea swell was no easy matter; nor, with the clumsy great cutlasses everlastingly doing their best to get between our legs and trip us up, was it a dignified

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proceeding either. The Dutchmen offered no resistance: indeed, so busy were they hauling in their nets, that they bestowed no more than a cursory glance at my crew of armed sailors. The Dutch skipper, in a pair of large sea-boots, a brown fishing-smock covered with fish-scales, and a greenish (erstwhile black) bowler hat, greeted me with a broad and guileless smile on his rubicund countenance by politely doffing his incongruous headgear. As if *he*, an innocent Hollander, could possibly have been guilty of unneutral conduct! That, however, remained to be proved. When I told him that I was going to take his drifter into Aberdeen for examination, he merely smiled the more broadly, as if to say, "C'est la guerre," or its Dutch equivalent. He seemed entirely indifferent as to what we did with him or his ship, and fully lived up to the Dutch reputation of being a phlegmatic race.

When we boarded the drifter she was anchored by her nets, which extended a mile or more ahead of her. I ordered the skipper to haul them in as quickly as possible, and went with him into the wheel-house to look at his chart. It was not forthcoming until after a very prolonged search in the remotest bowels of the ship: he evidently had no use for such new-fangled aids to navigation as charts, and found his way about by some wonderful sea-sense instinctive in men whose lives are spent among the fishing banks and shoals of the North Sea. When at last he did show me his chart, and I asked him where he reckoned he was, he placed a large and grubby finger on the very spot corresponding to the

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latitude and longitude which I had obtained from the navigator before leaving the *Phaeton*, a position about 180 miles east of Aberdeen.

Meanwhile the nets and lines were being hauled in. As each of the larger fish came over the side, one man would seize it in his arms, another would detach the hook from its mouth, after which it was flung into a penned-off part of the deck where it was dispatched by a blow on the head with a heavy wooden club: the smaller fish were left to squirm about on deck.

All this occupied some time, and it was not until late in the afternoon, some two hours after we had boarded the drifter, that all the nets and lines had been hauled in, and we were able to set course for Aberdeen. When I asked the skipper at what speed he could proceed he replied in his best English, "Ite mile-ss" (eight knots). I told him that I wanted him to steam at full speed, to which he again replied, "Ite mile-ss." So "Ite mile-ss" it was. The sea was smooth except for a heavy swell which made the drifter roll considerably: it was too much for my petty-officer, who curled himself up on top of the engine-room casing, and took no further interest in life. Soon after we had started the skipper invited me down to the "cuddy," a particularly odorous apartment right aft in the bottom of the ship, to take tea with him. The liquid part of the meal I swallowed all right, but when he offered me a slice of a prehistoric cheese I thought it time to go on deck to get some fresh air.

Though the Dutchmen seemed harmless enough, I took no risks, and spent the night

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dozing at intervals on a pile of fishing nets in a corner of the wheelhouse with my revolver handy, and half my sailors awake and on watch on deck. As an accompaniment to my disturbed slumbers the skipper and helmsman conversed in gutteral undertones: all night long they smoked a particularly offensive and potent brand of cigar, and at regular intervals spat accurately into a corner of the wheelhouse—not my corner, I am glad to say. I took the opportunity of talking to the skipper about the war, but he was very non-committal regarding his sympathies with either the Allies or Germany.

We had a smooth and uneventful passage through the night, and the following forenoon fell in with one of our patrol trawlers off the Aberdeenshire coast. On sighting her I ordered the White Ensign to be hoisted over the Dutch flag in order to establish our identity. The patrol trawler closed us, and I told the officer in command that I was taking the Dutch drifter into Aberdeen for examination. In return he volunteered the information that he was searching for a German submarine recently reported in that area, and then bustled away at full speed on his inquisitive business. Under the circumstances, it will hardly be wondered at that I, unarmed as I was, also dashed off at full speed—"ite mile-ss."

We got into Aberdeen without further incident about two o'clock in the afternoon, just under twenty-four hours after first boarding the Dutchman. Having secured her in the fish-docks, I went ashore in my grubby uniform, sea-boots

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and scarf (no collar) to report to the Senior Naval Officer. I found him most considerate, and he readily agreed to the bold suggestion that my prize-crew and I should remain in Aberdeen to superintend the examination of the prize. He had the kindly discernment to realize how much we should appreciate a few days in civilization away from the dreariness of Scapa, though it was entirely unnecessary for us to remain in Aberdeen.

So it was arranged. Next day the Dutch drifter was moved into an inner basin under a crane, where the hatches were opened and her cargo hoisted out. For the most part this consisted of casks of dried and salted fish. My work of supervision was not very arduous: as they were hoisted out, I marked with chalk those casks from different holds which were to be opened and examined. The examination was thorough enough, and occupied three days. During most of this time the mate, a typical Hollander with goatee beard and wooden clogs, sat like a graven image on an upturned cask mending nets, apparently oblivious to what was going on around him. Hidden wireless apparatus was what we were chiefly on the look-out for; nothing, however, was found to incriminate the skipper, and his drifter was eventually released. Though the search had proved fruitless, it cannot have been without its moral effect: the knowledge that neutral ships in the British war-zone were liable to be detained for examination undoubtedly served as a deterrent to unneutral conduct.

Within a few hours of my arrival in Aberdeen

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a second Dutch drifter arrived in charge of another sub-lieutenant and his prize-crew. He and I spent three days ashore together in Aberdeen living at an hotel at Admiralty expense, and thoroughly enjoying our freedom from the monotony of life in the Grand Fleet. I was obliged to buy a few clothes to replace my "hoary mariner" rig of sea-boots and scarf, which hardly satisfied the conventions of Aberdeen society. As our work only occupied the forenoons we had plenty of time to visit such almost forgotten things as theatres, cinemas, restaurants and tea-shops. Our short leave came to an end all too soon, and we returned by train to Thurso, and thence to rejoin our ships at Scapa after an absence of about a week.

After two more unproductive "sweeps" of the North Sea, one in the middle, and the other at the end of May, I received my appointment as sub-lieutenant of H.M.S. *Forward*. I left the *Monarch* at Scapa, having served in her for over two years and eight months: I had been very happy in her, and number many life-long friends among my old shipmates.

On January 20, 1925, nearly ten years later, H.M.S. *Monarch* was sunk off the Scilly Isles in accordance with the Washington Treaty. For nine hours she provided a target for the bombs of aircraft, the 6-inch guns of light-cruisers, and the 15-inch guns of battleships and battle-cruisers of the British Fleet. She sank at ten o'clock that night.

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CHAPTER IV

H.M.S. *FORWARD*, 1915–1917

ELEVEN o'clock at night in a seemingly deserted Tyneside shipyard; the intense darkness of war-time punctuated at rare intervals by the glare of a steel-works furnace reflected on low-lying clouds; and through this darkness, stumbling over railway-lines, wire hawsers, and other impedimenta of a riverside wharf, came the newly-appointed sub-lieutenant of H.M.S. *Forward*—myself—to join his ship.

After endless questioning of chance police and others I found the ship lying alongside in the river. My first impression of her was by no means encouraging: she wore a dark, deserted appearance, and immediately I got on board I was met with the unwelcome news that she had not yet commissioned, the officers' mess was not open, and that only a care-and-maintenance party was living in the ship. My arrival under such circumstances was due to telegraphic orders received to join "forthwith," and to the war-time secrecy which precluded my being told that the ship was not yet habitable. However, I had arrived after a long railway journey from the south, and I was not going ashore again to find a hotel at that time of the night. So I remained on board, and, with the assistance of a real "old

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soldier" Marine servant, made the best of it in an empty cabin for the night.

This type of old Marine servant, still a private after thirty years' service, and with no wish to attain the responsibilities of higher rank, is more than worth the weight of his five good-conduct badges, and long-service and good-conduct medal. He is a fatherly old gentleman, and seems to look upon the officers whom he valets as irresponsible children. He will call you at seven with your morning tea, and if you are not turned out by 7.15 will come and tell you in a reproachful tone of voice that your bath is getting cold. He takes a personal interest in your clothes, too.

"What trousers are we going to wear this morning, sir?" or "Time we 'ad a clean shirt, sir."

His use of the plural personal pronoun implies a common wardrobe on the share-and-share-alike basis.

Within a day or two of joining the *Forward* I was sent down to Chatham to fetch the ship's crew and confidential books, and travelled north again with them on the night of June 2. The responsibility for the safe custody of secret and confidential books is nothing to that involved in shepherding a draft of two or three hundred sailors by train. Unless you travel by a non-stopping train or can persuade the guard to lock all the compartments, they will jump out at every stop, invade the refreshment-room, and only think of getting in again at the last moment, when the train is moving off. You are lucky to arrive at your destination with the same number

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of men as you started with. However, on this occasion I arrived with the full number, and the ship re-commissioned on the morning of June 3, 1915.

Forward was a scout-cruiser of 2,850 tons, armed with nine 4-inch semi-automatic guns: she was one of the few ships in the Navy with a poop.

In the middle of the month the Tyne was raided by a Zeppelin: many bombs were dropped, and some of the shipyards were damaged. I happened to be ashore that night and watched the Zeppelin overhead, heard the explosions of the bombs, and saw the fires they caused.

On leaving the Tyne the ship was stationed off Grimsby in the Humber during July and August as an anti-aircraft defence unit. On our periodical trips to sea we sighted and fired on Zeppelins met with on patrol, though we were unable to get sufficiently close to do them any damage.

As sub. of the *Forward* I became a member of the wardroom mess for the first time, one of eight wardroom officers. Not only that, but I was *the* sub., not one of eleven subs. as I had been in the *Monarch*. For the first time, too, I had a cabin of my own. It was very small indeed, and with the bunk, chest-of-drawers, washing-basin, and flap writing-table I was left with less than two square yards of deck-space to dress in. A deck-chair which I had bought just fitted between the bunk and chest-of-drawers, and when I wanted to open a drawer I had to put the deck-chair out into the lobby. Nevertheless I was

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very proud of my little cabin. Being over the port propeller the vibration at sea was considerable, and I had to stow away all loose gear which would otherwise soon have been on the deck.

My duties were watch-keeping on the bridge at sea, and officer-of-the-day in harbour: the latter necessitated being in one's clothes all night, snatching whatever rest was possible in an arm-chair. I was also signal officer, and had charge of all the confidential books, keeping the register of which occupied me during many long hours. In action I was in charge of the after gun-control position.

The two months that we lay in the Humber were the least pleasant of the two years and more that I spent in the ship. We were anchored about two miles off Grimsby in a sluicing muddy brown tide, and the weather for the most part was so bad that for days on end we were unable to get ashore for exercise. It was often too rough to run our own boats, and we were dependent upon a tug for our mails and provisions.

Early in September the ship went up to Immingham docks for boiler-cleaning. While there we received orders from the Admiralty that *Forward* was to proceed to the Mediterranean: though we knew nothing of what our future duties out there were to be, we all welcomed the change from grey seas and skies to a land of sunshine and blue water. We left for Plymouth within a few days of receipt of the orders, and were delayed there for a fortnight by a leaky main condenser.

The defect remedied, the ship sailed for the

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Mediterranean on the evening of September 24, escorting Torpedo-boat 30. In order to save her fuel, arrangements had been made for us to tow her, and we were provided with an eleven-inch coir hawser for the purpose. All went well until we got into the Bay of Biscay, when we ran into a gale. The barometer dropped rapidly to 28·3 inches, the lowest I have ever known it. The towing hawser parted, and the little torpedo-boat was left wallowing in the trough of terrific seas: though only four hundred yards away from us, there were times when only the top of her mast was visible. How she lived through that gale without being wrecked was a miracle. With tremendous difficulty, by floating a buoy down from windward, we managed to take her in tow again, but it was not long before the hawser again parted: this happened no less than four times, and each time we had to re-splice the towing-hawser.

Our own ship was in a bad way too, and was rolling forty-five degrees each way. What this means may best be realized by imagining a hanging lamp swinging forty-five degrees each side of its normal vertical as the ship rolled through a right-angle five or six times a minute. The wardroom was uninhabitable, none of the chairs could remain on its feet, and it was impossible to lay the table for any meals: we had to get what food we could—and nothing could be cooked—standing up. Little sleep was possible either, as it was a matter of considerable difficulty to remain in one's bunk at all. Worse still, with our low freeboard, we were shipping heavy seas,

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and many tons of water got down below, until the floor-plates of the boiler-rooms were flooded. Fortunately the pumps were able to keep the water under, or the fires would have been extinguished, and with no steam for the engines we should have been in a bad way.

For two days we were practically hove-to with the engines moving just enough to keep the ship head to sea. Eventually the gale abated, and with the torpedo-boat we made a good passage down the coast of Spain and Portugal, rounded Cape St. Vincent, and entered the Straits of Gibraltar on a morning of sunshine and smooth blue seas. As we passed through the Straits with the white-walled Spanish town of Tarifa to port, and the dark mass of Jebel Musa or Ape's Hill on the African coast to starboard, the famous Rock of Gibraltar, crouching like a lion on guard, came in sight ahead.

At the end of a stormy and hazardous week we arrived there with our small charge, and berthed alongside to coal. Our stay was very short, and after six hours we sailed again for Malta, which was reached on the evening of March 3. After a busy twenty-four hours coaling again and taking in provisions and stores the ship left for Mudros in the northern Ægean.

At this time the Gallipoli campaign was in full swing and, on being ordered to Mudros, it seemed that our expectations of taking an active part in the Dardanelles operations were soon to be fulfilled. Subsequent events, however, relegated us to a much less spectacular, though a no less important *rôle*. *Forward* arrived at Mudros

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at the end of the first week of October, shortly after the Allies had established themselves at Salonica.

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Mudros is in the Greek island of Lemnos, about sixty miles from the Gallipoli peninsula, and is a landlocked harbour about six square miles in area, with a single narrow entrance. In appearance it is the Mediterranean counterpart of Scapa Flow—the same desolate expanse of water, shut in by the same low, bare, rocky hills; bleak desolation in both cases, but blazing sun, heat, and dust at Mudros in place of the fog and cold of Scapa. It was the main administrative base of the Dardanelles Expeditionary Force: to that vast harbour came warships, store-ships, hospital-ships, colliers and troop-ships—the men and material of war, destined for Gallipoli. With a hundred or more ships at anchor in the harbour, and the surrounding brown hills dotted with the white tents of the base-camps, Mudros in those days was indeed a *champ de Mars*.

Among the more or less permanent institutions of the base one may mention H.M.S. *Europa*, an old cruiser used as a naval depôt-ship, and S.S. *Aragon*, Army headquarters ship. The report circulated by a certain facetious English illustrated weekly paper that the *Aragon* had run aground on soda-water bottles proved to be unfounded!

On our arrival at Mudros the four scout-cruisers, *Skirmisher*, *Sentinel*, *Foresight*, and *Forward*, were formed into a squadron for patrol and escort work in the Ægean under the senior officer

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in the *Skirmisher*. Our duties were to escort transports and store-ships to either Mudros or Salonica. In general our routine was five days out on patrol, and two or three days in at Mudros.

Meeting our ship in the Kithera Channel between the western end of Crete and Cape Malea in Greece, we would take her over from the other escorting warship and set course to the northward up the transport route: if she were a slow vessel we would zigzag ahead of her, and if a fast ship she followed in our wake. Rounding the extinct volcanic islet of Belo Pulo, on past the islands of Hydra and Georgios at the entrance to the Gulf of Athens, we came in sight of Cape Colonna (the ancient Sunium), the southernmost point of Attica. Here are seen the ruined columns of the Greek temple of Poseidon at the summit of a cliff a sheer two hundred feet high. Through the narrow Zea channel between Zea and Makronisi islands the plain of Marathon was not far off on our port hand. There in 490 B.C. was fought the great Battle of Marathon in which the Athenians under Miltiades defeated the Persian army of Darius. There, too, originated the modern Marathon race: an Athenian soldier ran the twenty-two miles from Marathon to Athens to bring the news of the victory to the capital, and having delivered his message, dropped dead.

Leaving behind us this scene of ancient history, we came to the Doro channel between Andros island and the larger island of Eubœa. Tucked away in a little bay in Eubœa, close to the southern entrance to Doro channel, is the small town of Karystos, lying at the foot of a steep

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mountain scarred by marble quarries. Often when we had a few hours to spare when waiting for a transport we used to put in there and send the stewards ashore to buy fresh vegetables, scraggy chickens, or eggs. One of the officers would land also, and with the aid of the Greek interpreter, tactfully question the inhabitants in order to obtain information of the state of affairs in Greece. At that time the sympathies of the Greek nation were divided, the Venezelists being pro-Ally, and the Royalists under King Constantine definitely antagonistic.

North of the Doro channel the transport routes separated, one going northward past the islands of Skyros and Strati to Mudros, and the other farther to the westward to Salonica. Following the later, we rounded the low islet of Psathura with its tall lighthouse at the eastern end of the Skopelos group of islands, and headed westward for the entrance to the Gulf of Salonica. Off Psathura I once saw a most remarkable mirage. From far away below the horizon, out of the haze on a sea of glassy calm, came two ships, one upside down above the other, their masts, funnels, and bridges joined together in a double inverted image.

To the northward appears Mount Athos at the point of the eastern prong of the trident-shaped Chalcidean peninsula which juts out into the Ægean from the coast of Macedonia. Rising to a height of over six thousand feet, its white marble pyramid peak can be seen on a clear day more than fifty miles away. Often known as the "Holy Mountain," on its steep slopes are a

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score of monasteries, belonging to different nations, which have been there for many hundreds of years. No woman is allowed to set foot within their sacred precincts and, so strict is their seclusion, that even hens, as members of the fair sex, are said to be excluded!

Ahead of us, before turning northward into the Gulf of Salonica, is the eastern coast of Thessaly with its fable-famed mountains; the perpetually snow-clad summit of Mount Olympus, the abode of the gods, towering nearly ten thousand feet into the clouds; and the lesser Ossa and Pelion which the Titans heaped one upon the other in order to be able to reach Olympus. Here, as we infrequently went on to Salonica itself, we handed over our escort duty to another warship and turned south again to meet and escort the next ship that was expected.

So for months on end continued our anti-submarine patrol and escort work; up and down the transport route between Crete and Salonica or Mudros, by day and night, until we knew every island, every lighthouse and landmark along the whole 350 miles of the route. It was not showy work, nor was there any glory attached to it: it was sheer solid grind in all weathers, howling gale or blazing sun. Never once did we sight an enemy submarine, though they were frequently reported in all parts of the Ægean, and ships for which it was not possible to provide an escort were sunk behind our backs. We were justifiably proud of the fact that in all our two years out there we never lost a single ship for whose protection we were responsible. When at sea and

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not engaged on escort duty we carried out anti-submarine patrol in our allotted areas. German submarines were suspected of receiving supplies of fuel from the Royalist element in Greece, and our operations against them included boarding and examining Greek caiques (native sailing boats) suspected of supplying fuel to the U-boats, as well as searching the Greek coast and islands for hidden submarine bases.

The monotony of patrol and escort work was relieved now and then by visits to Athens, taking dispatches for the British Legation from Mudros and the Dardanelles. On one such occasion the ship anchored off the Piræus about five o'clock in the morning and, with the entrance to the harbour lit by the ship's searchlights, I was sent ashore in our steam-cutter with a weighted bag of dispatches for the British Minister in Athens. Arrangements had been made for me to be met at the Greek Custom House landing by a Legation messenger who would take over the dispatches. On arrival at the Custom House at the appointed time I found no sign of the Legation messenger, only a few Greek sailors slowly waking up, and a coffee-seller or two setting up their stalls in the deserted street. It was six o'clock, and not yet daylight. I waited for half an hour, and as there was still no one to meet me I telephoned to the British Minister in person, and reported my arrival with the dispatches. He can hardly have been pleased at being awakened and called to the telephone at 6.30 in the morning, though his voice sounded as if there were nothing he liked better than to be hauled out of bed to speak to

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a very junior officer in His Majesty's Navy at that early hour. Such is diplomacy.

It turned out that the Legation messenger was waiting for me elsewhere, so, taking the boat farther down the harbour, I eventually found him, and handed over the dispatches. It was a curious coincidence that these same dispatches were shortly afterwards captured from a Greek ship in the Gulf of Athens by a German submarine commander.

Besides taking dispatches we now and then carried passengers—a dragoman lately of the British Embassy in Constantinople, a Russian military attaché, a high dignitary of the Greek Church from Salonica, a suspect undesirable character deported from Mitylene, and even a well-known English novelist whom we brought from Athens to Syra one dark stormy night.

On return to Mudros from our turn of duty at sea the first day was invariably spent coaling ship, and the second in clearing up the mess which that occasioned. The great event of our return to harbour was getting a mail, which was brought from Malta once a week by S.S. *Wahine*. Regularly, week after week, the *Wahine* arrived at Mudros without mishap, her high speed enabling her to avoid submarine attack: she never failed us, and was our one dependable link with home. Not so dependable was the arrival of the food-supply ships, which were often delayed from one cause or another, and occasionally sunk. We generally managed, however, to get our supplies of frozen meat, though often we had to depend upon tinned corned-beef or salt-pork.

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As a change from these our messman one night gave us some tinned tripe—as a great treat! Potatoes were a luxury, and we had to make shift with rice instead. We were very friendly with the hospital-ship *Karapara*, who kindly supplied us now and then with small quantities of ice, a boon in the hot weather.

In course of time great improvements were made at the base: piers were built, an air-station established, a distillery set up, and a golf course, several tennis-courts and football-grounds were made by working-parties landed from ships in harbour. There were also excellent bathing places round the coast, outside the mouth of the harbour, where we used to picnic and bathe in the summer.

A walk ashore through the camps at West Mudros to either the adjacent trawler base at Kondia, or farther afield up in the hills to Therma, gave us an occasional day's exercise and change from life on board. At Therma, on the way to Kastro, the capital of Lemnos on the west coast of the island, is a natural hot spring: one may sit in a marble bath into which the hot spring water flows, and afterwards an old Greek peasant will cook an excellent omelette, and brew coffee for lunch. It was here that we bought a lively young sheep-dog pup which we took back to the ship. We called him Gipsy: he was a most entertaining shipmate and would now and then tear round and round the wardroom at full speed, with flying leaps from chair to chair, until he was exhausted. Outside the mess were two empty brass cartridge-cases which were used either as

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a gong for meals, or to give warning that a boat was alongside ready to go ashore. Gipsy soon learnt the significance of the gong: it meant either food or a run ashore, equally pleasant events in a dog's day.

When the weather or other circumstances prevented our getting ashore, H——— and I busied ourselves on board developing and printing the many photographs which we used to take at Mudros, and in the other islands which the ship visited. After a time we were able to make up an album, and supply copies of photographs to our messmates.

On Christmas Day, 1915, we happened to be in harbour. In the forenoon the usual parade of the Captain and officers round the messdecks took place. Each mess was decorated for the occasion, and the tables were spread with all manner of delicacies of which, with the customary exchange of Christmas greetings, the sailors pressed us to partake. When it is realized that there were not less than two or three dozen such invitations it is not surprising that, on return to the wardroom at the end of "rounds," we should empty our caps of the presents of chocolates, figs, dates, and other Christmas fare which we were unable to consume under the eyes of our generous hosts. Later in the day the sailors dressed themselves up, and pulled round the Fleet in boats beating drums and cymbals, and generally making an unholy noise. This may sound childish, but it must be remembered that, living the rather monotonous life that we did out there, any occurrence out of the ordinary,

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such as Christmas Day, was a welcome occasion for celebration.

For five months of that winter of 1915–16 our work of escort and patrol continued, varied now and then by the visits I have mentioned to Athens, Syra, Milo, or other of the Ægean islands. Our duties never took us within sight of the Gallipoli peninsula until one day, on completion of our patrol, we obtained permission to go and see it. We did not approach very close in order not to interfere with operations. A white-painted hospital ship was lying off Cape Helles, and trawlers and other small craft were moving about up and down the coast. At intervals a column of spray leapt up from among our ships, the splash of a shell fired from a Turkish gun on the Asiatic shore. The Gallipoli peninsula lay low along the horizon, its sandy brown cliffs shimmering in the heat. To the northward was Imbros island, where, at Kephalo, was the advanced base of the Dardanelles Expeditionary Force: still farther away the mountains of the Island of Samothraki rose 5,000 feet up into the blue. That was our only sight of Gallipoli before its evacuation on January 8, 1916: our *rôle* on that occasion was the humble but important one of sending wireless reports of weather conditions in the vicinity of Doro channel.

Towards the end of March *Forward* was sent down to Malta to refit.

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Sixty miles south of Sicily and some two-hundred miles from the African coast is the self-governing British Crown Colony of Malta: it

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lies on the direct route between Gibraltar and Port Said, equidistant from each.

As one approaches Malta from seaward its low brown cliffs, rocky coast, and seeming total lack of greenness give an impression of desolation. But to us, coming from Mudros, the sight of the island spelt civilization, not desolation. Passing up the Grand Harbour with the centuries-old fortifications of Valetta towering high above us, the ship was berthed alongside, secure at any rate for a few weeks after a continuous half-year of the insecurity of war.

Since the sixth century B.C. Malta has belonged in turn to the Phœnicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Arabs, Normans, Turks, Spaniards, French, and English. St. Paul was wrecked there in A.D. 58, and on the northern coast St. Paul's Bay is the traditional scene of his shipwreck. In 1530 when the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem were ejected by the Turks from Rhodes which they had occupied for two centuries, the Order settled in Malta, where it remained and ruled until the end of the eighteenth century. These Knights of Malta were of diverse nationalities, and sprang from the nobility of Catholic Europe. The representatives of each country had their own "auberges," imposing buildings with spacious courtyards which exist in Valetta to this day. Of these the Auberges of Castille, Italy, France, Provence, and Auvergne are in the higher part of Valetta; those of Aragon and Bavaria are in the lower part towards the sea. The original headquarters of the Order was at St. Angelo, a Norman fort on the southern side

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of the Grand Harbour. Their church was the present St. John's Cathedral, and in it may be seen the side-chapels of each of the "*langues*" of the Knights of St. John with the monuments and tombs of their Grand Masters, a mosaic marble floor decorated with their arms, and a wonderful painted ceiling. The Palace of the Grand Masters is now the Governor's Palace, and contains some beautiful 17th-century tapestries, and relics of armour and weapons of the Knights.

In 1565, before Valetta existed, the Knights under La Valette, a French Grand Master with but 9,000 men-at-arms, withstood a four months siege by the Turkish forces of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent numbering 40,000. The scene of this famous siege was Fort St. Angelo and the old town on the promontory where St. Angelo stands: there may still be seen the huge stakes to which were attached the chain which closed the entrance to Dockyard Creek. The Valetta of to-day with the great walls, bastions, and deep moats of its defences was built by the Knights after the siege, and named after La Valette, the hero of the defence.

In 1798 an army of Napoleon *en route* to Egypt obtained possession of Malta, and the reign of the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem came to an end. In the following year, however, Nelson sent a squadron and troops who re-took the island from the French, and it has remained in British hands ever since, the main base of our Mediterranean Fleet, and an important military station.

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With the adjoining dependent islands of Gozo and Comino, Malta is about the same size as the Isle of Wight. Looking across country one sees an apparently endless vista of stone walls: the scanty soil of the island is walled up into terraces to prevent it being washed away by rain-storms. A certain amount of agricultural produce is obtained from the soil, but by no means sufficient to support the population: for three-quarters of the year food supplies have to be imported. But the island is by no means as bare and rocky as it may seem on first acquaintance. At the old Palace of San Antonio there is a most beautiful walled garden enclosing groves of oranges and many other trees and fragrant flowering shrubs. In unexpected places, too, one suddenly comes across the stony dried-up bed of a stream, with the loveliest ferns and flowers lining its banks and poking up between the stones. Amid the prevailing brown of the countryside these rare patches of green trees and flowers are all the more delightful for their infrequency.

On a low hill in the centre of the island is Notabile, or Citta Vecchia, the ancient capital of Malta. It is a quaint old town, girt by the walled and moated defences of olden days, and honeycombed with labyrinthine catacombs, the tortuous windings of which were once used for burial, and, in times of persecution, as places of refuge. Now they are one of the show places of the island and, at the risk of getting a permanent crick in the back, one may be conducted round them by a grubby Maltese urchin who leads the way with a flickering candle.

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On the north-east coast, eight miles from Citta Vecchia by a rackety railway, the only one in the island, is Valetta, the present capital of Malta, situated on a high narrow ridge between the Grand Harbour on the south and Marsamuscetto harbour. On the point of this ridge, where it juts out into the Mediterranean, is Fort St. Elmo, a scene of desperate fighting in the days of the great siege. Running along the backbone of the ridge is the main street, Strada Reale, a narrow and often crowded thoroughfare where all the important shops are. Other steep and narrow streets run down to the water-front on either side, some so precipitous as to become flights of steps. In one of these is a large inverted iron hook, probably at one time used for hitching horses up to, and known to the Senior Service as "Promotion Hook." Tradition says that any naval officer who can squeeze himself through the hook will receive his promotion. One wonders how many of them, returning to their ships down that narrow street from the Club in the small hours of the morning, have squeezed through "Promotion Hook," or have been hauled through by their shipmates!

From the Barracca Gardens in the upper part of Valetta one looks down on the Grand Harbour over two-hundred feet below. It is a deep inlet about two miles long with several lateral creeks branching off it. On the extreme left is the harbour entrance: thence, to the right, Bighi Bay and the Naval Hospital; Fort St. Angelo at the point of land between Bighi Bay and Dockyard Creek, where are the naval dry-docks and

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engineering shops; the fort and town of Senglea separating it from French Creek, another part of the naval dockyard; the Corradino heights on which are the naval parade-ground and a distinctly dangerous asphalt hockey-ground; and, on the extreme right, Jesuits' Hill at the inshore end of the Grand Harbour. Immediately below the Barracca is the Customs House landing-place, reached by a lift which runs a sheer two-hundred feet down one of the great defending walls. From the heights of the Barracca the busy life of the harbour is spread out under one's eyes: lying at their buoys are the warships on whose decks one looks down, other warships lying alongside in French Creek, merchant-ships moored stern to the wharf below the Customs House, and everywhere little gondola-like dghaisas (the native boats) coming and going between the ships in harbour and Customs House steps. At night the level lines of lights of the warships, the twinkling lights of the dghaisas passing to and fro, other lights in shadowed buildings, and a bright moon overhead—these, with their shimmering reflections in the still waters of the harbour, make an enchanting spectacle.

What used to be the Auberge de Provence in Strada Reale is now the Union Club for officers of the Services. It has all the amenities of a modern club, and it was a great thing for us to have such a place to go to when we were ashore. About two miles out is the Marsa Sports Club, where almost any outdoor game one cares to think of may be played. Laid out on a flat plain are polo, cricket, hockey and football grounds,

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a golf-course and a race-course: in the middle is the Club House with hard tennis-courts and gardens adjoining it. On the opposite side of Marsamuscetto to Valetta is residential Sliema, and at Tigne close by is another small branch of the Union Club, chiefly patronized for tea and bathing parties.

Near the upper end of Strada Reale is the Opera House where, in the season, performances are given by Italian opera companies. The chorus is Maltese and goes on from year to year. They are very hardworking, so one hopes that the shouts of "*Bis!*" are a fitting reward for their labours. The opera in Malta is an important part of the social life of the island.

Leaving Valetta by the Porte Reale, one crosses the inner line of the old defences by a bridge over a deep moat, and comes to a wide piazza-like space of roads and gardens called Floriana. Under Floriana, as in certain other parts of Malta, are immense stone granaries, and one may see the heavy circular stone lids by which access to them is obtained. Close by are the botanical gardens where, when ashore once, in charge of a Roman Catholic church-party, I spent a pleasant hour waiting for their service to end. Beyond Floriana, on the way to the Marsa, one passes through the Porte des Bombes, a gateway in the second and last line of walls of the old fortifications which are here a blaze of colour with bougainvillea. Still farther on comes the appropriately named "Dew Drop Inn."

While driving out to the Marsa in a carrozza, a light four-wheeled carriage with a roof, open

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sides, and curtains, the game of "Priests" was a favourite means of deciding who should pay the fare. Each taking one side of the road, one counted the number of priests, monks, or schools of them which passed on one's own side. The method of scoring varied, but in general the higher the rank of priest the more points did he score, and the Lord High Priest (or whatever he styled himself) won the game. On the other hand, passing the padre of one's own ship lost the game. I have often wondered what these priests must have thought when they saw a carrozza driving past with a flannel-clad figure leaning out on each side, as likely as not pointing, and keeping the score in a very audible manner:—

"There's one—that's fifteen; how many are you?"

"Seventeen. Oh, there's a school of 'em; that's another ten."

One is reminded of another game of chance known as "zobbing" which originated among the Maltese, and which has been adopted by the naval officer for his own purposes. It consists of three positions of the hand: the palm open represents paper, the fist closed a stone, and two fingers extended a pair of scissors. The game is played by two persons. After two preliminary flings of the hand, each accompanied by the ejaculation "Zob," on the third simultaneous motion, each hand shows its paper, stone, or scissors. A win is counted when either paper wraps up stone, stone blunts scissors, or scissors cut paper.

Since priests abound in Malta, so are there

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churches without number, and church bells of every conceivable tone: at all hours of the day and night there is the sound of church bells.

Then there are goats—herds of them, which are driven from door to door and milked. What they live on is difficult to imagine, but they seem to extract nourishment from the garbage they find in the streets, particularly paper-bags, cigarette-ends, and empty tins. Only the natives drink goats' milk, as it was found that Malta fever, which at one time was prevalent among Europeans in the island, was due to their drinking goats' milk. There are no cows, so no fresh milk is obtainable.

Besides priests, church bells, and goats another characteristic of Malta is the "faldetta," a curious head-dress worn by the Maltese women: it is a semi-rigid black hood with a cape hanging from it over the shoulders, and held together in front of the body like a shawl.

But probably the most distinctive of all the features of Malta are the dghaisas. As already mentioned, the dghaisa is the native boat, and with its prow and stern-post, is not unlike a Venetian gondola on a small scale. It is usually propelled by two men, each with one oar with which he pushes the dghaisa through the water, standing up and facing ahead: it is also steered by the oars, as there is no rudder. The Maltese dghaisa-men are extraordinarily faithful, and seem to have wonderful memories. A ship will return to Malta after months, sometimes years, of absence, and waiting in the Grand Harbour to greet you is the same grinning "Jose" with

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his dghaisa that you had the previous commission. When a ship is stationed at Malta it is customary to engage, say, three dghaisas for the wardroom officers, and perhaps half a dozen for the ship's company. While the ship is in harbour these dghaisas attend on her all day, and up to probably ten o'clock at night: they lie off the ship waiting for a call alongside whenever any one wishes to be taken ashore. Some of the dghaisas are very resplendent craft with enamelled paint-work, varnished woodwork, seats with white drill-covered cushions, and sometimes a carved and gilded stern-post and backboard.

As a race the Maltese are quite a fine type, and are certainly most loyal to their British traditions. They are of Phoenician origin, modified in the course of centuries by Arabic, Spanish, and Italian influences. In appearance they are sallow-skinned and dark-eyed with a certain Arabic refinement in their features, and many of them are particularly handsome. Most naval officers who have visited Malta will remember Carmela, as much for her good looks as for the Maltese lace she may have sold them. Lace-making is one of the native industries of the women: the lace is hand-made, and some of it is very beautiful. In many ships of our Mediterranean Fleet, Maltese are employed as officers' stewards, and in that capacity are most efficient and trustworthy.

For two months *Forward* was at Malta in dockyard hands refitting. Living on board with the ship upside down and dirty, with painting, chipping, and hammering going on all day long,

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was as uncomfortable as usual, if not more so in the increasing heat. So we took every opportunity of going ashore. We played a good deal of tennis at the Marsa, and often drove back to Valetta to bath and dine at the Club, and perhaps go on afterwards to the opera. If one's funds did not run to a dinner at the Club one either returned on board for dinner—on one such occasion I was given soup made with salt water—or went across to the Junior Officers' Club. Here one had an inexpensive meal of sausages, or bacon and eggs, with beer and skittles to follow. The "J.O.C." was the cheery refuge of the impecunious.

Every now and then an informal dance was held in the ladies' part of the Union Club, and, with our V.A.D. friends, we used to go for picnics to Birzebbuggia, Ghain Taffieha, Marsascala, or other parts of the coast. There is in Malta a peculiar vehicle known as a flat cart on which, as its name implies, one lies on cushions on the floor of the cart: there are no seats. On one picnic to which I was invited we were each paired off with a damsel in a flat cart, and given a time to meet for tea at Marsascala. I should like to state without further ado that my picnic partner was a girl who had lived in Malta most of her life. We started off in great style, she driving, and I wielding the whip. After a stop to pick up the whip I took the reins and, driving through the Porte des Bombes, got the left wheel stuck in the narrow archway. That was an unfortunate beginning, but worse was to come. Not knowing my way about the island I was trusting to the

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girl to direct me; but she assumed an air of innocent helplessness, with the result that we got completely lost. Out at Birzebbuggia, on the far side of the island, we met an Australian officer on horseback. Of him I inquired the way to Marsascala, explaining that we were lost. He took one look at my fair companion, smiled, and remarked, "And very nice too!" He then rode away, leaving us to our own devices. We eventually joined the rest of our picnic party an hour and a-half late for tea. The look that our hostess gave me was most eloquent, but we were so far forgiven as to be allowed to drive back to Valetta together.

In this pleasant manner, almost forgetful of the war, passed the months of April and May. On April 27 occurred a tragedy which jerked us back to the reality of war. One of our old battleships, the *Russell*, struck a mine just outside the harbour entrance and sank, many of her officers and men being lost. The French Fleet had been stationed at Malta throughout the winter of 1915–16, and was then due to leave for Argostoli. It was thought that the enemy had received information of their impending departure, and that a submarine had laid a minefield off the entrance in the hope of the French Fleet running into it. Evidently *Russell* had struck one of these mines.

Our refit concluded, *Forward* left for Mudros during the last week of May—back again to the war. To arm ourselves against the summer heat before leaving Malta we had bought two large overhead fans for the wardroom mess, and a

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soda-water-making machine for the wardroom officers' thirst. The sailors had fitted themselves out with all the necessary instruments for a brass band, a thirst-making rather than a thirst-slaking institution.

. . . . .

On our return to Mudros at the end of May we found the harbour comparatively empty. Since the evacuation of Gallipoli the camps ashore had disappeared, troopships and store-ships had left, and even the *Aragon* had uprooted herself and gone. There remained only the war-ships of the Eastern Mediterranean Squadron with their depôt-ships and supply-ships. We thus found our work considerably lightened: there was less escorting to be done, though anti-submarine patrols still kept us a good deal at sea.

At this time relations between the Allies and Greece were becoming critical. There was continual dissension between the Royalist party and the pro-ally Venezelists, and the hostile activities of the former, not the least of which was the supplying of fuel to German submarines in the Ægean, were growing intolerable.

By the middle of June the situation in Athens had become, to say the least of it, delicate, and *Forward* was sent there at short notice from Mudros. We anchored in Phaleron Bay, and my captain landed and went up to the city to confer with the British Minister as to the necessity of landing the ship's detachment of Marines. In order to attract as little attention as possible he had gone ashore in plain clothes, and I landed with him, also in plain clothes. Being war-time

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I had none of my own with me, and the suit I wore belonged to another officer, one of considerable girth. His trousers hung in festoons round my ankles, and were literally wrapped round my waist at least one and a-half times: the sleeves of the coat completely hid my hands, and that, too, was wrapped round me like an overcoat. Thus disguised, and looking like a scarecrow, I waited in an hotel on the sea-front at Phaleron for a telephone call from the captain at the Legation in Athens. If the Marines were to be landed he was to telephone the letters "L.M.," and if not, "O.K." After a wait of an hour or more, which time I spent in trying to hide my ridiculous-looking self from every one, the call came through, "O.K." So I went outside, climbed up on to a bandstand, and with my voluminous garments flapping in the breeze, signalled this cryptic message to the ship.

Though the situation in Greece seemed easier for the moment, it was evidently necessary to adopt a policy of coercion in order to put an end to the unneutral practices of the Royalists. In this connection, on June 19, *Forward*, flying the flag of Admiral Fremantle, was ordered to Milo, an island in the southern Ægean which had been taken over by the French as a naval base. A conspicuous feature of Milo is the terraced vineyards which climb, tier upon tier, up the steep brown hillsides. Ashore there one will see a venerable Greek priest with long black cassock and flowing white beard ambling along seated sideways on a diminutive donkey, wearing a quaint hat like an upside-down top-hat. These

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tiny donkeys carry the most enormous loads, often as big as themselves. It was in this island that the famous statue of the Venus de Milo, now in the Louvre, was discovered in 1820.

The ship remained at Milo for five days, when, the projected operations against the Greeks having been abandoned, we returned to Mudros and our humdrum patrol duties.

For the next two months little occurred of any interest. Between occasional escort trips we patrolled along the Greek coasts and among the islands, searching bays and inlets where submarines might be expected to lurk, and boarding Greek steamers and caiques in search of contraband. Off the Skopelos islands one afternoon we received a wireless message to the effect that a submarine had been sighted in that vicinity a few hours before. With all our guns manned and loaded, and bristling with fight, we dashed at full speed through the narrow channel between Skopelos and Skiathos islands, but not a sign of the submarine did we see. We used to tell ourselves that the very sight of such an aggressive little ship as we were kept any submarines at a respectful distance.

In the summer heat this work became very tiring and monotonous. Especially trying was the constant strain of four-hour watches on the bridge in the blinding glare of a summer sun, keeping a sharp look-out for the scarcely visible periscope of a submarine, or for floating mines. Both by day and night we were obliged to keep all scuttles closed, and the heat between decks became unbearable. On a pitch-dark night,

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steaming without lights, one had to keep as sharp a look-out as by day, for the dim shape of a ship hardly showed until you were almost on top of her.

One still hot night, so calm that the stars were reflected in the sea, I was in charge of the ship as officer-of-the-watch on the bridge. We were steaming peacefully along, and the only sounds were the swishing of the water along the ship's side and the tread of feet pacing up and down the bridge below. As I looked out ahead a luminous streak of phosphorescence suddenly appeared on the starboard bow coming straight for the ship. A torpedo! My finger was on the push of the alarm rattlers, and I was just about to give an order to the helm and engines when a porpoise broke surface under our bows in a smother of phosphorescent foam.

During the summer we were sent to Athens on several occasions and, while anchored in Phaleron Bay, had opportunities of going ashore to see the city and its famous Acropolis. Phaleron with its tree-lined promenade along the shores of the bay, and its hotels, cafés, and bathing places, may be described as the seaside resort of Athens. It is joined to the city four miles inland by an electric railway, and on warm summer evenings the Athenians come down to walk up and down the sea-front, or sit at the café tables out of doors sipping their coffee and listening to the band.

As we generally wore uniform when ashore in Athens we were recognized as British officers, and as such our reception varied as did the political temper in the city at the time. As a contrast to the scowls of the Royalists there were times when

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we were greeted on arrival at the station by a bevy of young girls who gathered round and pinned flowers in our coats, crying "Vive l'Angleterre." We found this somewhat embarrassing.

In those days of the Monarchy a most picturesque sight were the soldiers of the model regiment of Ezvones which was stationed at the Royal Palace, and corresponded to our Guards Regiments. Their uniform consisted of a short blue jacket over wide white sleeves, a white kilt like a ballet-dancer's fustanella, and white stockings: on their heads they wore a low red fez with a long tassel, and on their feet a peasant's turned-up shoes ornamented with huge black pom-poms. They still survive as the Republican Guard.

From the plain which slopes down from Athens to the shores of Phaleron Bay a rocky hill, sheer on three sides, rises to a height of three-hundred feet above the city. This is the world-famed Acropolis on which, nearly 3,000 years ago, stood the original town of Athens. Its flat summit was subsequently crowned with wonderful white marble temples dedicated to the worship of the goddess Athena which date back to the fifth century B.C. As time has passed they have suffered damage and change at the hands of Persians, Romans, Venetians, and Turks until there now remain but magnificent ruins of their former glory.

The chief of these monuments are the Parthenon, the Erectheum, and the Propylæa. From the Areopagus, or Mars Hill, where St. Paul preached to the Athenians, a gradual slope leads

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up to the western end of the rocky hill where the Propylæa forms the great stepped approach and entrance to the Acropolis itself.

The Parthenon, over 200 feet long and half as wide, was the great Temple of Athena. Of its original forty-six marble Doric columns but few remain standing: most of them lie around in pieces, and the roof which they supported is gone. About 500 A.D. the Parthenon became a Christian church, and in the fifteenth century was converted into a Turkish mosque.

Close by the Parthenon is the Erectheum, a smaller temple with Ionic columns containing the sanctuary of the goddess Athena. Its chief beauty is the porch of the Caryatides, with six marble statues of virgins supporting the roof in place of columns. One of these figures is among the Elgin marbles at the British Museum, and has been replaced in the Erectheum by a plaster cast.

From the Acropolis is a magnificent panorama: to the north and east is the city of Athens with Mount Hymettus in the background, to the west its commercial port of Piræus, and southward Phaleron Bay and the Gulf of Athens.

At the foot of the precipitous south side of the Acropolis are the ruins of the Theatre of Dionysus: a short distance away, standing alone on the bare plain, are the few huge Corinthian columns that remain of the hundred and more which once formed the great Temple of Jupiter.

By the end of August relations between Greece and the Allies had again become critical: the Greeks had allowed the Bulgars to occupy Kavala on the Macedonian coast, constituting a threat

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to the Allied position at Salonica. Pressure was accordingly brought to bear upon them by the occupation of the Greek naval base of Salamis by Allied naval forces, and by the seizure of the Greek Fleet. French and British battleships and cruisers, among them the *Forward*, assembled at Milo during the last week of August and, on September 1, under the command of the French Admiral du Fournet, steamed in an imposing line up the Gulf of Athens into Salamis harbour. *Forward* was the second ship to enter, her duty being to lay buoys to mark the anchor berths for the Allied battleships. We were uncertain whether the Greeks would offer any resistance, and it was a tense moment as we passed the forts at the entrance to Salamis, wondering whether they would open fire upon us or not. However, there was no opposition and we passed in, followed by the British and French battleships.

During the next few days the situation in Athens became so acute that the Allied diplomatic staffs and other residents were accommodated in a ship at Salamis under the protection of the Fleet. A demand for control by the Allies of Greek posts and telegraphs, and for the dismissal of the Ministers of the Central Powers was presented to the Greek Government. *Forward* remained at Salamis until September 12, when we returned to Mudros and our ordinary duties.

During the next two months a good deal of our time at sea was occupied in enforcing the blockade of Greece which had been instituted by the Allies in order to ensure compliance with their demands. This necessitated the boarding

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and examination of all Greek steamers or caiques that were met at sea, and their detention if found to be carrying contraband.

In October the ship was at Salonica for several days. Salonica is the principal seaport of the Balkan peninsula, and was originally founded in 315 B.C. Since then it has been under the rule of the Romans, Saracens, Venetians, Turks, and finally the Greeks. For the past year, however, the city and port had been in occupation of the Allies, and was the main base for Allied military operations in Macedonia. The harbour was full of warships, transports, and store-ships, and ashore had sprung up the tents and hutments of great base camps and hospitals. In the streets one met a most cosmopolitan crowd: British, French, Italian, and Russian soldiers and sailors rubbed shoulders with Greeks, Jews, and Levantines—all the riff-raff of Eastern Europe.

From the Vardar marshes on the west to the big military hospital-camps at Karaburun on the east the city climbs from the mile-long waterfront up a hill to the seven-towered castle at the top where the two-thousand-year-old walls form the northern boundary. At the eastern end of the quay is the conspicuous White Tower, and close by is the French Club, founded by French army officers after the Allied occupation. At the other end of the quay is the more modern part of the city: here was Venizelos Street with Flokker's Café, well known to many officers stationed at Salonica during the war. A few hundred yards inland the up-to-date shops give place to the old bazaars in crowded narrow alleys,

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partly roofed over with glass. Uneven narrow streets lead upward between tumble-down old wooden houses, with here and there a domed mosque and its minarets, and occasional cypress trees. Sanitation was very primitive, and evil smells abounded.

There used to be a low type of a café-music-hall known as the Odeon. The floor of the auditorium was occupied by café tables, and three or four tiers of boxes surrounded it. I have seen a number of Russian soldiers create a considerable diversion by climbing up the face of the boxes from the lower to the upper tier during the performance. I also had some trouble with a "lady" in the adjacent box to mine who, not content with leaning across and appropriating my beer, then accused me of having taken her purse.

While at Salonica we were lucky enough to have a car and military chauffeur lent us for the day, and drove out to the Struma front, about fifty miles away. The road by which we went was the main line of communication of the British Army on that front, and though rough, had been widened and improved by the military. Leaving behind the huge army dumps on the outskirts of the city, the road wound across bare rocky country, climbed up over bleak hills, and dipped down into desolate valleys. Convoys of laden lorries lumbered past on their way from the front, and at intervals we passed military posts and dumps of stores or munitions. From the top of the last ridge one looked right across the Struma valley, flat and bare and brown, from

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the muddy Struma river in the foreground to a range of mountains eight or ten miles away in the distance. Dropping down the steep winding road into the valley we crossed the river by a shell-torn wooden bridge, and a couple of miles farther on stopped at the British front-line trenches which here ran through the ruins of the battle-battered village of Yeni Keui, captured by the British three weeks previously.

Our pre-conceived notions of trench-warfare were somewhat upset on finding our front-line trenches empty, and by being told that the Bulgar lines were six miles away in the foothills of the mountains across the other side of the valley. This was not what we had come to the front for. We had expected whistling rifle-bullets, the stutter of machine-guns, and the whine and crash of shell-fire—all the sights and sounds of "grim-visaged war." Instead, we found stagnant peace, heat and flies, and the nearest enemy six miles distant.

However, we set out to remedy this by walking out into "No man's land"—a British officer pointed out the "safest" route—to an advanced observation post in a small wood about three miles from the Bulgar lines. Keeping off the main road which runs across the valley in order not to attract shell-fire, we plodded on through the coarse grass and occasional patches of rough cultivation of that hot flat plain which had been the scene of the battle of Yeni Keui. Here and there we came across shell-holes, and everywhere was the débris of a battlefield—unexploded shell-cases, unfired clips of cartridges, shell-fuses,

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equipment, and fragments of exploded shells and shrapnel bullets. Arrived at our advanced post in the wood, we came upon a peaceful scene: in the shade of the trees the Tommies were cooking their mid-day meal, cleaning their equipment, or playing cards, while overhead the sun shone and the birds sang among the branches. Let it not be imagined, however, that the life our soldiers led on that front was all of this kind. Though there was little activity by day there were occasional encounters with enemy patrols at night, and constant vigilance was necessary. Through our binoculars we could see the Bulgar trenches three miles away, and every now and then could be heard the report of a British gun hidden in a wood on our right bombarding the enemy barracks in the small town of Seres. Quite as deadly an enemy as the Bulgars was the scourge of malaria which was rife in that hot bare Struma valley.

Having seen all that there was to be seen we started back for our front-line trenches. On the way we collected souvenirs, just to show that we really had been to the front. My pockets bulging with fuses and cartridges, a battered French shrapnel-helmet clasped fondly under one arm, two 18-pounder brass cartridge cases slung on my stick, and a camera and binoculars round my neck, I must have looked like a Christmas tree, and sounded like an animated ironmonger's shop. We also collected nine 18-pounder shell-cases, one for each of our messmates who had not been so lucky as to come with us, and a large green enemy shell which we

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found by the roadside, unexploded and still fused. In the Army unexploded shells found lying about are treated with respect, and it is forbidden to touch them. Not so with foolhardy sailors on a visit to the front, however. We unscrewed the fuse and banged it on the road to see if there was any life in it, and as it did not explode we lifted that great green shell, six inches in diameter, two and a-half feet long, and probably weighing 150 lbs., and dumped it in our car. When we got it on board we removed all the explosive, and had it mounted on the poop as a trophy.

On our way back we stopped to watch an observation balloon being hauled down, and eventually reached Salonica after dark and went off to the ship with about 3 cwt. of trophies.

Shortly after this diversion we returned to Mudros and the "daily round and common task," but within a month *Forward* broke down with a badly worn "A"-bracket bearing. (The "A"-bracket is the after and under-water support of the propeller-shaft.) During our year's escorting and patrolling in the Ægean the ship had covered some 40,000 miles with only one docking, so considering her age it was hardly to be wondered at that she should at last show signs of wear. Curiously enough our sister-ship *Foresight* also broke down with the same defect at the same time. So on December 3 we sailed in company for Malta, each on one engine only, like a pair of lame ducks. As it was found to be impossible to repair both ships in Malta dockyard at that time, *Forward* was sent on to Genoa.

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Leaving Malta again on the 8th we passed through the Straits of Messina, "'twixt Scylla and Charybdis" at the northern end, where the straits are less than two miles wide and, in the dark, sighted the flames of Stromboli's ever-active volcano to the north of Sicily. We called in at Spezia, an Italian arsenal and dockyard, on the 11th, and disembarked all our ammunition in a hailstorm, finally reaching Genoa next day.

Genoa, one of the chief mercantile ports of Italy, rises in tiers up the hillside from the harbour. Many of the main streets are lined with arcaded shops, and at Staglieno, outside the town, is the famous Campo Santo with its wonderfully carved marble tombs and memorials.

During three weeks there, which included Christmas, several of our officers were able to get away on leave for the first time for over a year: I had a most enjoyable week's leave and winter-sports in Switzerland, probably a unique experience in war-time.

One dark wet night when I was on duty on board I had sent in the skiff to bring off a number of our men from shore. As she was late in returning I was about to send in another boat when, out of the darkness of the basin where the ship was lying, appeared an Italian shore-boat towing our waterlogged skiff. Standing up in his boat in the pouring rain was the dripping cursing figure of the boatman. Amid the volume of abuse issuing from his lips I could distinguish two supposedly English words—"officeer" and "monnee." His meaning was plain: if I were to give him money he would bring our swamped

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boat alongside. I first tried another method: I told the Marine sentry to point his rifle, which was not loaded, at the raving Italian. The effect was electrical. With a final cursing shriek he sprang up on the thwart of his boat and struck an attitude like a martyr at the stake. Next he proceeded to fling all the loose parts of our skiff, backboard, rudder, tiller, bottom-boards and stretchers in every direction round the harbour. He then disappeared cursing into the darkness, leaving our skiff adrift in the middle of the basin. If I had had a boat ready manned I would have sent it after him, but as it was, it was two o'clock in the morning before I got our men off from the shore, and the skiff and her component parts floating round the harbour collected.

The repairs to our shaft-bracket completed, the ship left Genoa on New Year's Day 1917 and, after a day at Malta, reached Mudros again on January 8.

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In our absence the political situation in Greece had not improved. Anti-Ally riots in Athens in December, and repeated failures of the Greek Government to comply with the Allied demands, had resulted in a further tightening of the blockade, upon which duty we were employed on our return. As if to celebrate a new lease of life after repair, the old *Forward* steamed 5,000 miles during the first twelve days of 1917. In the early part of February we spent a week searching the vicinity of Trikeri Channel which leads up to the Gulf of Volo in Thessaly, and

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Talanti Channel between Eubœa Island and the mainland of Greece, for sources of supply of fuel to enemy submarines. We visited Volo and landed food supplies for the British residents, and from there went to Chalcis, at the narrowest part of Euripo Channel, stopping on the way off Limni, where are valuable magnesite mines. Our search was without results, though no doubt the presence of a British cruiser in those parts had a valuable effect. For ourselves, we enjoyed the novelty of visits to new places, and the wooded scenery on either side of the narrow waters through which we passed was most delightful after the glare and monotony of patrol in the open sea.

On February 15 I was promoted to the rank of acting-lieutenant after two years and five months as sub-lieutenant: owing to the war, of course, I had been unable to do the customary courses at the gunnery, torpedo, and navigation schools, and none of the consequent examinations for the rank of lieutenant.

During the next month no incident of interest occured until, on March 20, a Zeppelin paid us a nocturnal visit while in harbour at Mudros. We were giving a concert that night, and about eleven o'clock the Zeppelin suddenly appeared over the harbour from the direction of Constantinople. A few bombs were dropped in the vicinity of the air-station, but no damage was done, nor were there any casualties. She passed almost overhead and so low that we could clearly hear her engines, but owing to our awnings being spread and the deck rigged for the concert, we

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were unable to clear away the anti-aircraft gun in time to open fire.

Towards the end of March we went down to Malta for our annual refit, and after a month there returned again to Mudros.

Early in May *Forward* took over the duties of Senior Naval Officer of the detached squadron operating off the coast of Asia Minor, based at Port Iero in Mitylene Island. Port Iero is a most wonderful natural harbour of considerable size approached from the south by a very narrow entrance. In the middle of the fairway is a small rock known as Square Rock, and on this lived an R.N.R. lieutenant with a few men: there was a small gun mounted there, and in the narrow channel was a minefield which could be detonated by pressing a key on Square Rock.

The island of Mitylene was the ancient Lesbos, the fabled birthplace of Sappho, and one of the Isles of Greece to which Byron alludes:—

> "The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece,
> Where burning Sappho loved and sung. . . ."

After the barrenness of most of the other Ægean islands which we had visited the wild flowers, olive groves, and cypresses of Mitylene were most delightful, even more so as they were in their springtime freshness, unscorched by the summer heat to come.

Forward relieved *Lowestoft* as S.N.O. on May 12, taking over the organization and running of the trawler and motor-launch patrols off the Asia Minor coast, besides a tennis-court and a chicken farm ashore which provided us with fresh eggs for breakfast at a penny each.

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My own work on board at this time was of particular interest. I relinquished my upper-deck duties, and was employed in staff-work, being responsible to the Captain for the routine of the trawler patrols, signal and wireless communications, cyphering, and intelligence work in general. This kept me very busy all day, and often at night as well.

The ship remained at anchor in harbour with her stern secured to the shore by wire hawsers, and was connected by telephone to the British Consulate in the town of Mitylene.

Things were fairly quiet off the enemy coast ten miles to the eastward, and our patrol trawlers were chiefly occupied in keeping a watch on the entrance to the Gulf of Symrna. One evening one of them returned from patrol with a live Turkish mine slung under her stern. An occasional enemy aeroplane would appear over Port Iero, but always kept at a considerable height.

Ashore there was a detachment of French troops who lived in tents, and the officers in bungalows among the olive groves. We soon made friends with the officers, and used to go ashore to celebrate the "entente cordiale" with them in Vermouth. Our dog Gipsy also made friends with them, and on one occasion was left ashore by mistake at the French camp. Next morning a French motor-boat was seen making for the ship, and, as is the custom when a foreign officer comes on board a British man-of-war, preparations were made to pipe him over the side, and the Captain and First-Lieutenant hurriedly summoned on deck. The motor-boat duly arrived

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alongside, the quartermaster and bos'n's-mate piped, and up the gangway came—our truant little dog!

It was a real pleasure to be able to go ashore in Mitylene and find tree-shaded walks and spring flowers after the parched treelessness of Mudros, where one went ashore more from a sense of duty to take exercise than anything else. And there was a pleasant feeling of being settled at anchor for a while, without the expectation of being ordered out on patrol within a day or two of arrival in harbour. We had several delightful bathing picnics on the coast, and also bathed from the ship. The walk to the town of Mitylene on the east coast, about six miles away, served as an excuse for visiting a wayside refreshment hut where one was said to find Turkish Delight. I heard so much about it that I went there one day, and found the Turkish Delight to be long-haired and dark-eyed. With her delicate even features, her dark eyes, and sun-browned complexion, even her rough country peasant clothes failed to hide her undoubted Eastern charm. When we found, too, that she could speak a few words of English we began to wonder where she had learnt them, and what her life had been before she settled with her rascally-looking old father in that roadside hovel. Perhaps she had been a servant of a British Consular officer in some remote little island.

Among other interesting characters whom we met at Port Iero were the "Anatolian Irregulars," a band of "brigands" under the leadership of a learned professor of Oxford University.

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Officially they were unknown, but reports of their activities reached our ears—tales of landings by night on the enemy coast, of cutting-out expeditions among herds of sheep, and the consequent enjoyment of fresh meat.

After two or three weeks in harbour the ship put to sea to visit other parts of our area down the Asia Minor coast. On the way we bombarded a Turkish gun-position and had the satisfaction, as evidence of its existence, of provoking a reply to our fire, though the nearest shell fell at least two miles short of the ship. After a brief stay at Kastro in the little island of Chios we went on to Port Vathi in Samos. Here, quite unexpectedly, we found ourselves involved in a whirl of social gaieties with the local Greek aristocracy, one of whom we christened "Erasmic," as being the nearest we could get to her name.

After a week of tennis parties and picnics I received my appointment—consequent upon my promotion to lieutenant four months earlier—as first-lieutenant of the *Staunch*, a destroyer belonging to one of the Eastern Mediterranean destroyer-flotillas. The night before I left by trawler for Mudros I was given a farewell dinner. Appropriately enough, considering where we were, we "filled high the bowl with Samian wine"—metaphorically, at any rate—to celebrate my having served in the ship for just over two years.

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CHAPTER V

H.M.S. *STAUNCH*, 1917

"HALLO, old thing, are you my relief? What'll you have?" (Iced lemon squash.)

"Well, here you are; here's a destroyer. . . . Damn that fellow Wilson. . . . *Wilson!* . . . (Yessir!) . . . Have you packed my books," etc., etc.

Such was my greeting by the "Number one" of the *Staunch* whom I relieved as second in command when she arrived in Mudros harbour on June 30. He wasted no time in getting away, and with three cheers from the sailors was gone, and I was left as executive officer of a destroyer for the first time in my life.

Staunch was a destroyer of 748 tons, with a complement of six officers and about seventy men. The officers were a lieutenant-commander in command, a lieutenant (myself), a sub-lieutenant, a gunner, a commissioned engineer, and a surgeon-probationer. My duties as executive officer included general responsibility to the captain for the organization, routine, and cleanliness of the ship and her boats, and I was also in charge of the gun armament which comprised two 4-inch and two 12-pounder guns. I was very pleased to have received this appointment as it meant more responsibility and more

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interesting work than that of the two or three previous years' watch-keeping, of which I was heartily tired. It was pleasant, too, to feel oneself a person of some importance—an impossibility for a junior lieutenant in any ship larger than a destroyer. As "Number one" my day at sea started at 4 a.m. when I went on the bridge to keep the morning watch: in harbour I was up at six o'clock when the hands turned to.

Despite the harder work, destroyer life was much more "free-and-easy," and things were done without the rather wearisome "pomp and circumstance" which seems necessary in a big ship. My captain would wander into the ward-room at breakfast-time, clad in nothing but a bath-towel, and tell the sub. to put Tosti's "Good-bye" on the gramophone while he had his bath. One can hardly imagine such familiarity in a battleship, where the captain lives in stately solitude.

Staunch was the first oil-burning ship in which I had served, and after having been accustomed to spend many hours of the first day in harbour coaling on return from patrol and escort duty, it was nice to come into harbour and replenish with fuel with no more trouble than that of putting a hose-pipe over the side.

Within a few hours of my joining the *Staunch* we sailed for Salonica, where we arrived the following morning, and began our duties of escorting transports and store-ships between Salonica and Alexandria. We generally left Salonica with the ship to be escorted at sunset. Sometimes when an enemy submarine had been

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reported in the area of the Ægean through which our route lay, we used to put into Trebuki Bay, a small rocky inlet in Skyros Island where we remained during daylight hours, continuing our voyage again at sunset the following evening. It is in this bare island that Rupert Brooke is buried, and of which he may well have written his celebrated lines :—

> "If I should die, think only this of me,
> That there's some corner of a foreign field
> That is for ever England. . . ."

Our first passage down to Alexandria was uneventful. We spent a day or two in Alexandria harbour, and enjoyed being able to go ashore in a civilized port, and see again such almost forgotten things as hotels, cafés, and shops—verily the "fleshpots of Egypt." Being my first visit to Egypt I found a lot to interest me, from British Dominion troops in khaki to the Egyptian in his tarboosh, and his veiled women-folk whose yashmaks left only a pair of bright dark eyes visible. A favourite resort of the British was the Sporting Club at Ramleh, a tram ride outside Alexandria along the sand-dunes. Here was a racecourse with golf-links laid out inside it, and a number of tennis-courts where we used to go in the afternoon to play and meet English women at tea, and forget the war for a while.

On a subsequent occasion we left Salonica in the evening escorting to Alexandria a ship with 4,000 troops on board. The escort consisted of *Staunch* and another destroyer *Redpole*, whose captain was ill, and who was therefore commanded

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by her first-lieutenant. The first morning out, in the middle of the Ægean, a message was brought to me that my captain was very ill: our doctor told me that he suspected cholera. When I saw the captain I realized at once that he was very seriously ill indeed, and that I should be obliged to take over the command of the ship myself. I decided to make for Syra, the nearest island where I knew I should find a British cruiser and doctor, and land the captain there. I therefore reported my intention by wireless to the senior officer, and ordered *Redpole* to proceed with the transport to Alexandria while I went on as quickly as possible through Mykoni channel, between Tinos and Mykoni Islands, to Syra. Here I found H.M.S. *Skirmisher*, and sent my captain on board her, whence he was eventually transferred to the French hospital ashore. Leaving Syra as soon as possible, I rang down "Full speed," and managed to rejoin *Redpole* and the transport before dark. I have often since wondered what the officers in charge of the troops and transport would have thought if they had known that their safety was in my hands as senior officer of the escort. I was then aged twenty-two, and the first-lieutenant of the *Redpole* was only twenty—two mere children responsible for the lives of some 4,000 men, and for getting them in safety 500 miles across the Mediterranean through the enemy submarine area to Alexandria.

We reached Alexandria safely two days later. Having reason to believe that the ship was infected with cholera, I went into harbour flying

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the quarantine flag. This stirred up a regular hornets' nest! Directly I was in sight of the old battleship *Hannibal* came a signal from the Senior Naval Officer inquiring why I was flying the quarantine flag, immediately followed by a second signal ordering me to anchor close to *Hannibal*. Before the cable had stopped running out arrived a third signal ordering me to go to quarantine anchorage. This was already full of merchant ships of many nationalities, but I found a clear berth, where I anchored to await further developments. These soon arrived in the shape of a motor-boat with the Egyptian port health authorities. When I mentioned "cholera" they refused to come on board, so our doctor and I went down into the boat and talked the matter over with the Egyptian doctor. The result was that we were placed in strict quarantine, and a boat containing two dark-skinned gentlemen in tarbooshes was made fast astern of us as a guard to prevent any communication with the shore or other ships. Not content with this, all the ship's company had to parade stripped to the waist for examination by the doctors, and the ship was sprayed throughout with disinfectant.

In the evening I received orders to complete with oil-fuel at the oiling jetty. This necessitated worming my way out from the crowded quarantine anchorage in the dusk, and backing stern-first alongside the jetty. Never having handled the ship until then, I found this a somewhat difficult manœuvre, but finally accomplished it safely. On completion of oiling I had to thread

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my way back to the anchorage, this time in the dark, and find a clear berth in which to anchor for the night.

Early next morning a cable was received from Syra to say that my captain was suffering, not from cholera, but from acute food-poisoning. Much ado about nothing! This information was quickly followed by orders for *Staunch* and *Redpole* to proceed at once to Suda Bay (Crete).

So at nine o'clock off we two destroyers went in the teeth of a north-westerly gale to Suda Bay. I passed rather closer to the eastern end of Crete than I had intended, and arrived at Suda Bay on the second evening. After twenty-four hours there we picked up the captain again next day at Syra. I had commanded the *Staunch* for five days, and navigated her some 1,200 miles across the Mediterranean without mishap; lest I should become too elated, however, the only thanks I got from the captain was a reproach for having landed him in a fly-blown French hospital where the food was most unpalatable, and where there were no pretty nurses! But there was a grateful twinkle in his eye.

On some of our escort trips between Salonica and Alexandria we put into Suda Bay, the British naval base in Crete of the trawlers and motor-launches of the southern Ægean anti-submarine flotilla. A house ashore had been rented, and turned into a Naval Club, and two hard tennis-courts had also been made by ships based there. We occasionally went ashore to play tennis, or meet our friends from other ships at the Club. I also walked to Candia, a quaint but very dirty

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and untidy old town two or three miles distant. One heard stories of bandits up in the mountains, but I never met any of them, though the ordinary Cretan peasant is a sufficiently ruffianly-looking individual to satisfy most people's tastes in bandits.

We were detached from our escort duties on one occasion to take the Russian Consul's wife, family, and household goods from Suda Bay to Piræus, the port of Athens, whence she was to go on by train to join her husband at Salonica. Owing to the activity of enemy submarines in the Ægean, the ordinary passenger services between the islands had long been suspended, so *Staunch* was requisitioned to evacuate the Russian Consul's family. After breakfast one morning they arrived alongside in a picket-boat, with all their belongings. This is what came on board our little ship :—

(1) Russian Consul's wife with baby in arms.
(2) Governess with two small boys and a small girl.
(3) A goat, a dog, a cat, a parrot in a cage, and a crate of young turkeys.
(4) Several pots of plants.
(5) Two enormous cases of crockery, some crates of furniture, and an assortment of trunks and suitcases.

I distributed all these impedimenta round the ship, and turned the goat loose among the sailors, who fed it on cigarette-ends and used-up tins of condensed milk ! We then left for Piræus. Nothing would induce any of our guests to go down to the wardroom or captain's cabin : they

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were evidently afraid of being trapped below if anything happened to the ship. So we settled them on the quarterdeck in deck-chairs, and fed them on sweet champagne and biscuits, which was all they could be induced to take. An added difficulty was that we had no language in common: they could speak neither French nor English, and we could speak no Russian. Owing to having to keep the after gun ready for action it was impossible to have the quarterdeck awning spread, and those poor people remained on deck in the blazing hot sun for six hours. There was a fresh breeze and a slight motion on the ship which added sea-sickness to their other sufferings. I tried sending the two small boys up to the gunner on the bridge, but the motion was too much for them, and down they came again.

The baby yelled, the children cried, the dog barked, the parrot screeched, and the goat bleated. We were very sorry for the ladies and children, but none of our pantomimic efforts to persuade them to go below and lie down was the slightest use: they remained on deck the whole time until we arrived at Piræus in the afternoon. We sent them ashore in a native boat with all their goods and chattels, and though they were very grateful to us, they must have been most thankful to be on *terra firma* again. The governess was the last to leave the ship, and as she went over the side she expressed her gratitude by slipping a five-drachma note into my hand! This was the first and only time that I have had women on board a warship at sea in time of war and, incidentally, the only occasion on which

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I have ever received a tip for doing my duty as a naval officer!

The sequel to this episode occurred when we were at Salonica a week later. My captain and I went ashore to call on the Russian Consul to inquire if his family had arrived safely. He was most profuse in his thanks for all we had done, and told us how sorry he was that his wife was unable to see us, as she was in bed suffering from the effects of exposure to the sun while on board the *Staunch*, which had taken all the skin off her face.

On a subsequent occasion we had escorted the Union Castle S.S. *Saxon* to Salonica. It was at this time that the convoy system had first been inaugurated, and when ships were camouflaged in waves and bands of colour: the *Saxon* presented an extraordinary appearance in her war-paint. On the morning following our arrival one of the *Saxon's* boats came alongside, and a basket was handed up to me with a card inscribed, "With the Captain of the *Saxon's* compliments and thanks." I opened the basket and found inside the most attractive little black Persian kitten, which we adopted as a member of the wardroom mess: it was christened Clarence, and proved a very entertaining and lively little shipmate. Clarence was generally to be found curled up in the most comfortable armchair in the mess, and could only be dislodged by being given a ball of paper to play with.

From Alexandria we were once detached to escort an empty ship to load at Famagusta, a town in Cyprus with remains of Venetian

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fortifications. We lay alongside her there for three days while she embarked hundreds of donkeys and goats. Famagusta is one of the hottest places I have ever been in, and the plague of flies in the ship while these animals were being put on board was a positive pest, disturbing our sleep, and making our meals most unpleasant. A few miles outside the town, on an arid dusty plain, was a large prison-camp where several hundred Turkish prisoners of war were confined, guarded by a small British military detachment. We paid a visit to this camp, and played a cricket match against the soldiers. We eventually took our ship back to Alexandria, and got rid of our cargo of flies, only to get a fresh swarm from the *abattoir* just inside the harbour entrance.

It so happened that we were at Salonica again on August 18, when the fire which burnt down a great part of the city began. I was ashore that afternoon, and saw volumes of smoke rising from the upper (north-western) quarter of the city. Walking up in that direction along mean, dirty streets, so narrow that the tumble-down old houses almost leaned across to meet overhead, I met panic-stricken men, women, and children hurrying down towards the harbour carrying their worldly possessions—mattresses, bedding, furniture, etc., piled high on their backs, and driving their miserable goats before them.

After dark, when I was back on board again, the fire had spread rapidly down the hill towards the harbour. Flames were rising high in the air, and the whole sky was covered with dense

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clouds of smoke lit by the glare of the flames. Fire and demolition parties had been landed from the warships in harbour with the object of blowing up buildings near the quay to prevent the fire spreading. We heard the explosions as the demolition parties got to work, but their efforts proved fruitless. The Senior Naval Officer visited us in a picket-boat, and asked the captain to take the ship alongside the quay to pump water on to the nearest buildings, but as these were by now a mass of flames, he did not think it safe, as the heat might have caused our ammunition to detonate and blow up the ship.

Ashore was a most awe-inspiring scene—nearly a quarter of the city in flames. One of the most remarkable sights was to see flames shooting high in the air out of the tops of the minarets, making them look like gigantic candles. By ten o'clock all the houses on the harbour-front at the western end were ablaze, and scores of caiques moored there caught fire and drifted down the crowded harbour among the war-ships, store-ships, transports, and hospital-ships. These caiques were a source of great danger to our ships, and had to be sunk by gunfire or other means. The air was full of burning débris and the acrid smell of smoke: we had to keep the hoses running over the matting on our decks, and over the boats' canvas covers to prevent them catching alight. We managed to secure one of the caiques which had drifted across our bows, made it fast astern, and pumped water into it until the fire was extinguished. Another lodged alongside a small Greek yacht anchored

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close to us, on board which a number of women had taken refuge. When this blazing caique arrived they flung themselves screaming into the sea: we sent our boats away to fish them out, and put them back on board their yacht again after the caique had broken loose and drifted away.

We were up most of the night paddling about in pyjamas and bare feet on our flooded deck, watching the flaming city and rolling clouds of smoke, and listening to the muffled explosions and roaring of the flames ashore. The fire-fighting arrangements and water supply of Salonica were entirely inadequate and far too antiquated to deal with such a conflagration, and even had they been more efficient, it would have been well-nigh impossible to have checked the fire spreading among those dry old wooden houses. That part of the city which was burnt was particularly unsavoury, so perhaps one may look upon the event, not so much as a catastrophe, as a beneficial "purging by fire."

When we returned to Salonica a week later many buildings were still smouldering, and the whole western part of the city was a mass of blackened ruins. By some miracle one of the largest mosques had escaped destruction: the fire had burnt all the houses round it, leaving it unscathed. The post-office in Venizelos Street was burnt out, and the work of sorting and distributing letters was being carried out on café tables in the streets, roped off and guarded by police. Many people were rendered homeless, and were accommodated in tents by the roadside on the outskirts of the city.

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During the autumn, as a change from the Salonica-Alexandria transport route, *Staunch* spent a few weeks on Dardanelles patrol. This being after the evacuation of Gallipoli, there was, of course, nothing happening on the peninsula, nor on our patrol between Samothraki, Imbros, and Gallipoli did we ever see any sign of enemy activity. The patrol was instituted to keep a watch on the entrance to the Dardanelles in case any unit of the Turco-German Fleet should make a raid on our lines of communication in the Ægean.

At the end of October we were withdrawn from Dardanelles patrol, and sent down to Port Said with our sister ship *Comet*, to join the small naval force consisting of monitors, an old cruiser, destroyers, and trawlers which was co-operating with our Army in Palestine. The Palestine coast between Deir el Belah, where Army Headquarters was then situated, northward past Gaza to Askelon is formed of bare low sand-dunes sloping down to the shore, with an occasional barren-looking palm tree to break the monotony of the coast-line. When we took up our duties on the left flank, about November 3, our troops were entrenched before Gaza, and preparations for what was afterwards known as the Second Battle of Gaza were then being made.

We two destroyers patrolled up and down at six knots, day and night, within a few hundred yards of the shore between Gaza and Askelon, firing at the Turks in their trenches, and at any parties of Turks and their transport that we could see behind the lines. In our turn we were

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fired upon by a field-gun hidden away among the sand-dunes. This gun was most troublesome to us, and though we were never hit we had extremely narrow escapes. This was the first time I had been under fire, and until I got used to it, found it quite an exciting experience, especially when the gun got our range and sent shells whistling between our funnels to fall in a forty-foot high column of spray within fifty yards of the ship. Any one who has been under shell-fire knows the high-pitched whining scream of an approaching shell, and the rather frightening thought as it gets louder and louder as to whether it will hit the ship or not. After a while one became quite callous about it, and I was roundly cursed by my captain on one occasion when I was in charge on the bridge and shells were falling close round us, for not getting the ship out of danger quickly enough. As a matter of fact, I had already given the necessary orders for the helm and engines, but it was unfortunate, when he came up, that he found me trying to take a photograph of the falling shell-splashes.

One evening when I was below having tea I heard the usual near-by explosions that told me that we were under fire again. I came up on deck to see the fun, and just as my head appeared out of the hatchway a shell burst in the water almost alongside, splinters from it falling on board. The gunner and I both saw a large splinter at the same moment, and made a simultaneous dash to secure it as a souvenir. I reached it first and snatched it up, only to drop it again at once, for it was too hot to hold. How-

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ever, it was my prize, and I secured it later, when it had cooled down, a nasty jagged piece of iron that had been part of a Turkish shell in one of their guns a few minutes before.

We received a signal from the Admiral in praise of our work under fire, hoping that we might continue unharmed.

Our monitors did excellent work, assisted by aeroplane spotting, in bombarding unseen strategical points behind the enemy lines. One of the larger monitors completely demolished, at her third shot, an important bridge fourteen miles inland on the Turkish main line of communication.

Our aeroplanes seemed to be masters of the situation ashore, and only occasionally did we see an enemy machine at all. One afternoon a British and a Turkish aeroplane came out to sea, and engaged in a machine-gun duel a few hundred feet above our heads, their bullets pattering in the water round the ship like heavy rain. During the darkness one night some enterprising Turk must have tried to sink the *Staunch* by rifle-fire, for the next morning I found the "splash" of a rifle-bullet in the middle of the white enamel-painted cover of the wardroom hatchway. There might have been a casualty if any one had happened to have been using the hatchway at the time, but, as first-lieutenant, I was much more concerned about my white enamel paintwork being spoiled. However, there it was, an honourable scar, and as such I left it.

The Second Battle of Gaza began at dawn

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on November 7. All through the previous night we were patrolling close inshore off the Turkish right flank, listening to the swelling roar of the British shells bursting incessantly over the Turkish front-line trenches, and over their support-lines and back areas. We watched successive shells bursting, and if one went too far over we would make a mental "down" spotting correction until we saw the flash of its burst where we knew the Turkish trenches to be. All night long the artillery preparation for the attack went on, increasing in volume until at dawn it was one continuous deafening roar. At zero hour when the attack started we could see very little in the dim early light but clouds of smoke from bursting shells, and a low-lying morning mist. Gaza itself was completely hidden. We knew when our troops had "gone over" as we heard the furious crackle of machine-gun and rifle-fire. It was most provoking to be so close and hear the sounds of battle, and yet be unable to take any active part. We wanted to let fly at the Turks, but could see nothing to fire at in that smother of shell-smoke and mist: we did not dare fire indiscriminately for fear of hitting our own men as they advanced.

As the morning mists and shell-smoke cleared away we saw one of our tanks left derelict on the beach, and parties of our troops advancing along the dunes, and, at times, cavalry on the skyline. A convoy of nearly a hundred laden camels which had come across the desert from Beersheba came under shrapnel fire from the enemy while crossing the Wadi Hesi, a small

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river about eight miles north of Gaza. Camels are well known to be phlegmatic beasts, and on this occasion they fully sustained their reputation. Now and then, as the puffs of bursting shrapnel cleared away, one or two camels in the long nose-to-tail line would be seen to have been hit and drop down. But the gap soon filled up, and on they went at their steady ambling gait, urged by their native drivers.

By evening all sight and sound of the battle had passed, and our army had advanced inland and northward. From that day dated the victorious advance of General Allenby's army, which drove the Turks out of Palestine. By November 9 the Turks had evacuated Askelon, and had retreated on Jerusalem. Their losses in that battle were about 70 guns and some 10,000 casualties.

Staunch remained off the coast until the evening, and as there was then no further immediate use for us, *Staunch* and *Comet*, with the two small monitors, were sent down the coast and anchored behind two lines of anti-submarine nets off Deir el Belah in order to save fuel and be ready in case there should be any further call upon our services. It will be realized that upon that straight open coast there was no harbour available nearer than Port Said, Jaffa at that time being in enemy hands. A double line of anti-submarine nets patrolled by trawlers was therefore the only possible protection that could be afforded our ships.

The following afternoon (November 11) it had been decided that we should not be required

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again, and orders had been received to raise steam and proceed to Port Said by the next morning to oil. The sub., gunner, engineer officer and I were sitting on deck after tea watching clouds of sand blowing off-shore in a regular sandstorm. Down below in the boiler and engine-rooms steam was being raised, and the turbines warmed through. The captain had taken the dinghy and gone over to one of the monitors to fight the Battle of Gaza over again with her captain. It was dusk, and in the failing light and whirling sandstorm we could scarcely see the shore a bare thousand yards away, nor the other ships at anchor. Suddenly, without the slightest warning, a tremendous explosion under our very feet seemed to lift the ship out of the water, and flung us out of our deck-chairs. Before we could realize what had happened there was a second explosion in one of the other ships at anchor. My first impression was that a bomb had been dropped on us, but then from the way the ship settled with a list to port and a half broken back, I realized that we had been struck by a torpedo.

The captain being out of the ship, the responsibility devolved upon me. I ordered one watch to close watertight doors, and the other to lower the boats and launch the Carley life-saving rafts in readiness to abandon ship. Only one of our boats was available, a whaler which could hold perhaps twenty-five men: the other whaler had been blown out of existence by the explosion, and the dinghy was away with the captain. While the men carried out these orders the

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officers did all that the situation demanded on their own initiative without any instructions from me. The charts, signal-books, and other confidential books were brought up and put into a boat, and the depth-charges were put to the "safe" position to prevent them exploding if the ship sank. The sub. even tried to rescue our little kitten Clarence from the wardroom, but she was frightened and hid under the settees where he was unable to reach her.

On seeing the damage done by the explosion I realized that the ship could not remain afloat much longer. The torpedo had struck on the port side abreast the bulkhead between the engine-room and after boiler-room, both of which were flooded: the eight men who were below at the time were killed. Having done all that we could to save the ship, I sent away most of the ship's company and all the officers in our one boat, on the rafts, and in boats sent to us from a steam yacht and the other destroyer, *Comet*.

By this time, perhaps twenty minutes after the explosion, it was nearly dark: the deck on the port side was awash, and ominous sounds told me that the ship was breaking her back and sinking. I went for'ard to the mess-deck to see that no men had been left shut in behind the closed watertight doors: receiving no reply to my hail, I assumed that they had got away safely. I kept a volunteer party of one petty-officer and half a dozen men on board with me until the last minute with the idea of perhaps being able to do something. But it was evident that no more could be done, and that the ship

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would not remain afloat much longer. I heard my captain hailing me out of the darkness, inquiring whether I had yet given the order to abandon ship, and telling me to do so at once. So I sent my party down into one of the yacht's boats which was waiting alongside, and jumped in after them. We pulled clear of the sinking ship, and within five minutes of leaving her she broke in half, her bow and stern went up in the air, and then sank slowly out of sight half an hour after the explosion. That she should have remained afloat so long is a great tribute to her builders and to the strength of her construction.

It is curious how, at moments of crisis, the most trivial things assume a tremendous importance, and leave their impression on one's mind for years afterwards. After I had got down into the boat my first thought was—not of my ship which was sinking before my eyes, and of all I should lose when she went down, nor even whether we should be landed safely—but that I wanted a cigarette. Never have I wanted anything so badly! And my cigarette-case was on my cabin table in the sinking ship. So I asked one of the sailors for one, and he produced it from where a sailor usually keeps such things—out of the lining of his cap. What brand of cigarette it was I do not know: it may have been the wildest of "Wild Woodbines," but oh, how I enjoyed it! I suppose the reaction to the strain and excitement of the previous half-hour accounted for that insistent craving, for it was in no spirit of bravado, like the nonchalant villain of melodrama, that I sat in that boat

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smoking my precious cigarette whilst the *Staunch* was going down.

I had hoped to have been the last to leave the ship, but on meeting my captain afterwards he told me that he had gone on board and had been down to his cabin, rescued certain of his valuables, and had got away just before the ship sank.

The other ship which had been torpedoed was the small monitor *M.* 15, whose magazine had exploded, and who sank in about a minute, half her crew being lost.

It was afterwards ascertained that *U.C.* 38 was the German submarine that had carried out this attack. Just over a month later she sank the French cruiser *Châteaurenault* in the Ionian Sea, but was herself destroyed, her captain being saved. One cannot but admire him for having made such a good attack. He had spent twenty-four hours watching our anchorage until he had located the entrance between the two lines of nets; he then dodged the patrol-trawlers, and crept inside under cover of dusk and the sand-storm, and fired his two torpedoes within seconds of one another much as one fires a "right and left" with a shot-gun, striking *Staunch* with one and *M.* 15 with the other torpedo.

Comet slipped her cable when the explosions were heard, and endeavoured to attack the U-boat, but was unable to find her on account of the gathering darkness.

My first sensation after being taken on board the yacht was that my throat was very dry. A stiff brandy and soda soon put that right.

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I lost everything I possessed when the *Staunch* went down, and landed at Port Said the following morning with nothing but the clothes on my back—a coat, a pair of soiled duck trousers, and what had once been white shoes. The naval authorities supplied our officers and men with money, and the latter with clothes; I bought a cheap ready-made khaki drill suit to replace my soiled uniform.

The officers were accommodated in the Marina Hotel, near the Custom House landing on the canal, and here I stayed for a fortnight, listening to the mournful clanking and creaking of the dredgers at work opposite, a sound which I shall never forget, and which I shall always associate with those long, hot, idle days in Port Said.

The funeral of one of our men who had died as a result of his injuries in the explosion was held at the English cemetery outside the town. One of our largest and fattest sailors had manfully endured the weary march, in a hot sun, out to the cemetery in his new boots. But they proved too much for him in the end, and he marched back along the dusty desert road on his horny bare feet, his boots slung round his neck, and a seraphic smile on his round, red perspiring face.

Our officers and men were obliged to wait in Port Said until the court-martial on the sinking of the *Staunch*—this to satisfy the British public—had been held. Having insufficient money and only rough clothes, I could not get away and go up to Cairo as I should have liked to do. I spent my time exploring Port Said, an unsavoury place,

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though I never ventured into the native quarter. Visits to the Eastern Exchange Hotel, to the English Club for tea in the evenings to read the war *communiqués* and English papers, or to the Casino Palace Hotel, facing the sea, for dinner—these and an occasional walk along the breakwater past the statue of Lesseps helped to pass the time.

The court-martial eventually took place on December 2, and, as principal witness, I gave evidence as to the steps I had taken to save the *Staunch*. The finding of the Court was that we had "acquitted ourselves in accordance with the best traditions of the Service," and that no blame was attributable to any of the officers or men.

As soon as this was over the crew of the *Staunch* was sent home in charge of the sub. and gunner: they travelled overland through France in troop-trains with wearisome waits in various rest-camps, and, as far as I know, did not reach England until the middle of January.

After a fortnight's boredom and idleness ashore I was lent temporarily as first-lieutenant to H.M.S. *Lizard*, a destroyer whose first-lieutenant was ill. Though I was glad to have something to do, it was aggravating to be kept on out there just when, the court-martial over, I might have got away to England. I was in the *Lizard* for a fortnight, during which time we made one trip up to Jaffa with the Admiral. It was then in British hands, and while the Admiral was ashore conferring with the military authorities we went up to the coast and fired a few rounds

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at any Turkish soldiers we saw. Having thus given vent to our feelings we re-embarked the Admiral, and proceeded down the coast past Deir el Belah, where we saw the mast of the *Staunch*, and the muzzle of *M.* 15's 9·2-inch gun sticking out of the water. Not often does one see anything of one's ship after she has been torpedoed. I should like to have had the idea which came to me later of ordering the White Ensign to be hoisted at the foremast head before the *Staunch* sank. It would probably still have been flying when we saw the ship's mast from the *Lizard*.

Except for this one trip at sea *Lizard* remained in harbour. My duties on board were purely nominal, and we generally went ashore as soon as the forenoon's work was over, and played tennis.

At last, on December 10, after a long month in Port Said, I left for England in a sloop escorting an 8-knot convoy to Malta. This took five days, and I spent a further five days in the naval depôt there awaiting passage across to Taranto. I eventually left Malta on December 20, saddled with two large weighted bags of dispatches to take to England as King's Messenger. Under ordinary circumstances I should have had a Marine orderly, and a reserved compartment in the trains through Italy and France. On arrival at Taranto, however, I found that no arrangements whatever had been made for the King's Messenger and his dispatches. There was no orderly, no reserved compartment, and I could not carry two heavy bags of dispatches

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in addition to the humble Japanese basket which was all my own baggage. Under these circumstances I left the dispatches in H.M.S. *Queen*, the Senior Naval Officer's ship at Taranto, as I felt unable to accept the responsibility of getting them through to England in safety under such adverse conditions. I was very glad afterwards not to have been burdened with them, as the Italian railways had only just been reopened to passenger traffic after having been closed for extensive movements of troops. Also it was the week before Christmas, and all the trains were terribly overcrowded.

I reached Rome early one morning, and as my train did not leave until the evening I spent the day seeing the sights. I have only a very superficial impression of what I saw. I went over St. Peter's, set in a piazza of semicircular colonnaded arcades, flanked on one side by the Vatican, and to my mind rather spoiled by the adjacent slums. On the northern side of the Capitol, the 200-feet-high white marble monument to King Victor Emmanuel II, with its fifty-foot high columns and gigantic statue of the King on horseback, was very impressive, though blatantly modern compared to the Forum and Colosseum. The latter I had no time to see.

After a second night in the train we passed through Genoa and Milan, and reached the frontier station of Modâne late that night. From Modâne there was only one train a day to Paris, and when that came in about one o'clock in the morning the scene that ensued was indescribable. British, Italian, and French officers, Army Nursing Sisters,

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and civilians made a frantic rush for seats before the train had stopped in the station. I saw a French General jump on to the footboard of the moving train, and climb in through the window in order to secure his seat. By a lot of determined elbow-work our party of four managed to get places.

We arrived in Paris the following afternoon, and found our train left for Havre at five o'clock. Beyond the fact that the daily Havre-Southampton boat sailed sometime between ten and eleven p.m. we had no certainty of getting across that night. As events turned out we were delayed by fog, and did not reach Havre until 10.45, to find that the boat had sailed half an hour earlier. This was Christmas Eve, and it had been a race against time for sixteen days, all the way from Port Said, in the hope of getting home for Christmas Day. But it was not to be, and we spent a wretched rainy Christmas Day in Havre, and tried to make up for the disappointment by eating a large Christmas dinner at the Café Tortoni.

We finally left by that night's boat, and reached Southampton at six a.m. on December 26, welcomed home after two years and three months abroad by a typically English wet day.

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CHAPTER VI

H.M.S. *CENTAUR*, 1918

THE leave to which I had long looked forward was interrupted after a bare ten days by a telegram ordering me to report to the Commander-in-Chief, Chatham, to take up an immediate appointment. There, on January 9, 1918, I joined H.M.S. *Centaur*, a light-cruiser of 3,750 tons, belonging to the famous Harwich Force: she had previously been Admiral Tyrwhitt's flagship, and was then recommissioning as a private ship on completion of repairs to her stern which had been blown off by a mine.

From Chatham we sailed for Harwich, where we remained for four days, and then went up to Scapa Flow for three weeks to "shake down," do our gunnery and torpedo practices and drills, and generally perfect the fighting organization of our new crew. This is a most necessary procedure in a newly commissioned ship: we could not have taken our place as a fighting unit in the highly trained and organized Harwich Force until the officers and men had come to know one another and their ship, and had learnt to work together in all respects.

After an absence from Scapa of two and a half years, to see the Grand Fleet again with its latest additions of the most powerful battleships

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in the world, together with the American Battle Squadron, was a most impressive experience. We had little to do with them, however, and spent our time independently exercising and firing in Scapa Flow or at sea.

This strenuous, but rather dull, time was enlivened by the arrival of a letter addressed to "Any Lieutenant, H.M.S. *Centaur*." Of course we all claimed this letter, which, on being opened, was found to contain lavish praise of our Admiral from one Marjorie, who much admired him, his officers, and the Force in which they served. This was too good to ignore, so "Any Lieutenant" wrote anonymously demanding a photograph of his fair admirer. When it duly arrived Marjorie was seen to be a nice-looking damsel, arrayed in Red Cross uniform, evidently a V.A.D. The correspondence was pursued for a few weeks, and eventually died a natural death.

There were about a dozen officers in our wardroom, and I found myself the only non-specialist Lieutenant R.N., with R.N.R. and R.N.V.R. officers to make up the number of watch-keepers. My action-station was spotting-officer in the fore control-top, which lofty eyrie I shared with the gunnery lieutenant, who controlled the fire of our five 6-inch guns.

Centaur joined the Harwich Force on February 17, after a very rough and wet passage from Scapa down the war-channel. This channel extended for three hundred miles along the east coast of England and Scotland: it was marked by lettered buoys every few miles of its length, and divided into sections which were swept free

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from mines every day by flotillas of minesweepers based at east-coast ports. It was the "main road" for all sea traffic, both allied and neutral, in the North Sea.

The Harwich Force comprised eight "C" class light-cruisers, about two dozen destroyers, and a number of submarines. The strategic position of Harwich gave the Force the importance of being the unit of our Fleet situate nearest to German naval bases, and for that reason it came in for a large share of the little fighting there was in the North Sea. The flagship was in direct telephonic communication with the Admiralty, by whom our movements were directed, and the whole Force could be at sea within an hour or two of receiving information from the Admiralty of any movements of the enemy. In addition there was a "striking force" consisting of one light-cruiser and a duty division of four destroyers which was nominally at one hour's notice for steam, but which was often away half-an-hour earlier. One of the duties which fell to the lot of the duty division of destroyers was that of what we called "Beef trips"—escorting small convoys of food-carrying vessels across from Holland to the Thames.

Being in such a state of instant readiness, little leave was possible. To the "striking force" no leave was granted: the remaining ships were given leave from one p.m. or four p.m. to seven p.m., and then only within recall. So we were never able to go far afield when ashore. The means of recall was a sustained blowing of all the light-cruisers' syrens, a hideous pan-

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demonium which could be heard halfway across Essex. Unlike the shore leave we had in the Mediterranean, often in wild inhospitable places, there was a certain amount of social life ashore at Harwich. Many officers had their wives in "rooms" at Dovercourt, and also cultivated allotments in which they dug with great energy. Often enough, after a hard afternoon's digging, I was enjoying a well-earned tea, when the recall was heard, and I had to leave my tea and hurry off to the ship. On these occasions conventions were flung aside, and one commandeered any vehicle which happened to be passing to take one with the utmost speed down to the pier. Here half the population of Harwich would be gathered to watch the officers and men embark in the waiting boats, and hurry on board, thinking they were going to sea, and would possibly be in action with the enemy within a few hours. One often dashed at breakneck speed down to the pier, only to find that one's own ship was not included among those ordered out. In that case one returned to finish the abandoned tea.

The golf links at Parkeston, the tennis club at Dovercourt, or later in the evening, the Alexandra Hotel were favourite rendezvous ashore. At about 6.45 on most evenings a taxi containing any number between six and a dozen officers might have been seen loading up outside the "Alex." for the trip down to the pier to catch the seven-o'clock boat off. I believe that long-suffering taxi has been known to take as many as fourteen.

Every two or three months each light-cruiser

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would be out of routine for forty-eight hours' boiler-cleaning: these were the only occasions when we got any long leave, and were able to go as far as Ipswich, Felixstowe, or elsewhere.

The Harwich Force had an unpleasant habit of putting to sea late at night, just when one had turned in with the comforting thought of a "night in" to follow. Such trips were generally with the object of intercepting enemy destroyers, minesweepers, or submarines known to be on passage during the dark hours along the Dutch coast between Germany and Zeebrugge or Ostende. Not infrequently we failed to fall in with the enemy, or were ordered back to harbour again within a few hours of leaving. On one such occasion the flagship put to sea, accompanied by the duty division of destroyers, at about midnight. *Centaur's* sailors' amateur band paraded on deck in the dark and played "We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go," a popular war song, as the flagship left. She returned unexpectedly in the early hours of the morning with *her* band paraded, and retaliated by playing "Here we are, here we are, here we are again."

Another time, after *Centaur* had been out, and was ordered back and due in early in the morning, F———, who was gun-control officer-of-the-watch in the foretop, had remained aloft to finish his sleep after the remainder of the guns'-crews and control-parties had been dismissed from their stations. The ship arrived in harbour at about seven o'clock, and when "Divisions" was sounded off two hours later, F——— was nowhere

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to be found. He was eventually awakened by the bugle and bustle of "Divisions," and looked over the edge of the foretop with sleepy eyes to see Harwich church and town, and the remainder of the light-cruisers lying peacefully at their buoys, while he had imagined the ship was still at sea.

On February 26, the Harwich Force was inspected by H.M. the King, and the officers and men marched past him on Parkeston quay in the morning: when he left in the afternoon we "manned and cheered ship."

Though the Harwich Force was more often in action with the enemy than most other units of our Fleet, our first four months provided no incident worthy of mention. We were continually in and out of harbour, either to intercept enemy light forces reported off the Dutch coast, or on periodical reconnaissance trips to the edge of Heligoland Bight when the Grand Fleet made its occasional "sweeps" of the North Sea. Accompanying the squadron on these occasions were seaplanes from the naval air-base at Felixstowe, towed by destroyers on specially constructed lighters. On arrival off the Texel, Haaks Light Vessel, or Terschelling the seaplanes would be released from their lighters to carry out their reconnaissance flights along the Dutch and German coasts, while the light-cruisers and destroyers remained in support until the seaplanes had flown back to Felixstowe. Several such abortive trips were made: either the weather off the coast was too hazy for reconnaissance, the sea too rough for the seaplanes to leave the lighters,

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or it was so cold that it was impossible to start their engines. Zeppelins were frequently sighted on patrol off the Frisian Islands: they made no attempt to molest us, and though we occasionally fired on them with our 6-inch guns at extreme elevation they were always able to keep out of range, thanks to their superior speed.

When the Harwich Force put to sea on the evening of April 22, *Centaur* was left behind with a defect in one of her main condensers. Though it was not known until afterwards, the squadron was out as a covering force between the Dutch and English coasts to prevent the arrival of any German reinforcements which might interfere with the attack on Zeebrugge and Ostende. So secret had the attack been kept that it was not until after it had been successfully carried out, and the squadron had returned to harbour that we knew anything at all about it.

During the second week of May an epidemic of influenza put *Centaur* out of routine, and certain other ships were also affected. On first going to sea after this we towed a kite-balloon. It had but recently been supplied to the ship, though kite-balloons had been in use in the Grand Fleet for some time for submarine look-out work. I went up in this ungainly gas-bag, and looking over the edge of the tiny basket suspended below the balloon, saw my ship like a toy a thousand feet below, ploughing through the water at 25 knots, her bow-waves and wake scarring the sea with an arrow of white foam. Our sole slender connection with the ship was a wire barely as thick as one's little finger by which we were being

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towed from the winch, and which also served for telephonic communication with the ship. The pilot improved the shining hour by offering to show me how to wear the parachute harness . . . "Just in case"—as he said! At a thousand feet the balloon towed steadily enough, but as the winch hauled her down, and we came at about 200 feet into the region of oil-fuel gases from the funnels, she developed a sickening side-to-side swaying motion which necessitated clinging very tightly to the edge of the basket. The oil fumes were also exceedingly unpleasant at that height. The kite-balloon was not at all a popular visitor to have on board, as, on account of the danger of igniting the gas, we were unable to have the wardroom fire alight.

During the latter half of May we were at sea a good deal, once in search of a phantom enemy submarine towing a balloon—or was that only a "buzz"?—and, on the following day, boarding and examining suspicious Dutch trawlers, some of which were sent into Harwich in charge of prize crews. Three days later the whole Harwich Force was out covering a mine-laying sortie off the Scheldt: it was so still and calm that night that the guns in Flanders could be clearly heard out at sea. We sighted and narrowly avoided a number of floating mines.

As protection against mines the light-cruisers always ran with their paravanes out at sea. "Out P.V.'s" was the first thing done on leaving harbour, and wrestling with refractory paravanes and towing wires in the dark when no lights could be shown, often in a cutting wind and

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drenching rain or spray, was one of life's most unpleasant little burdens.

On the night of May 31, when the Harwich Force was over near the edge of Heligoland Bight, the flotilla-leader *Shakespeare* struck a mine. *Centaur* took her in tow at eleven o'clock and succeeded in maintaining a speed of ten knots homewards until the tow parted the next morning. Soon after we had taken her in tow again an enemy seaplane appeared upon which we fired. A cruiser sent up a small fighter-aeroplane to drive off the intruder. These small machines, which were carried on the roofs of battleships' gun-turrets as well as in certain of the larger cruisers, were land aeroplanes: when sent up at sea, unless they had enough fuel to fly to land, they were obliged to deliberately "crash" in the sea near one of our ships. On this occasion the fighter came down in the water close to a destroyer, who rescued the pilot and then salved the aero engine and as much of the machine as possible. After a while this became a more or less common occurrence.

We brought the *Shakespeare* safely back to Harwich.

Early in June preparations were made for a raid by *Centaur* and *Canterbury*, accompanied by destroyers, on the German patrol trawlers in Heligoland Bight. This raid was to be of the "sink without trace" nature: the idea was to run up alongside the trawlers, board them, overpower, and if necessary kill or capture their crews, seize their signal-books and sink them afterwards. By this means we should have been

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in possession of their signal-books and codes unknown to the German Admiralty, who would only have reason to think that certain of their trawlers had been lost, perhaps by having struck mines. I was to be in command of *Centaur's* boarding party of a dozen stalwart sailors. We spent two days ashore under instruction in the use of Mill's bombs which we duly learned to throw and explode without any casualties. The sailmaker made canvas slings to be worn round our waists, each to hold six bombs: the carpenter, not to be outdone, made us fearsome-looking weighted wooden bludgeons. Six bombs, a bludgeon, and a pistol each I considered as much as we could comfortably manage: the addition of a blowpipe with poisoned darts, half a dozen assegais, a tomahawk, and a couple of boomerangs —a helpful (?) suggestion of some of my messmates—was therefore regretfully vetoed.

The two light-cruisers and five destroyers sailed on June 13 in time to reach the edge of Heligoland Bight after dark. Before sunset I took the box of Mill's bombs to a quiet place on deck away from every one, and carefully inserted the detonators in each bomb. My plan of action on running up alongside the German trawler was to fling one bomb into the wheelhouse, another into the engine-room, and after they had exploded to dash up into the wheelhouse and seize the signal-books while my "buccaneers" dealt with the crew with their revolvers and bludgeons. We were all most excited at the prospect of a hand-to-hand scrap with the enemy in the dark.

Our entry into Heligoland Bight was to be

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made through a gap known to us between two minefields, which had been successfully used on previous occasions by our forces carrying out raids into the Bight.

That night I was on the bridge as officer of the watch. It was very dark and, as usual, all ships were steaming without lights: the dim shadowy shape of the *Canterbury* was barely discernible ahead of us. It was about 9.25, and we were nearing the gap between the minefields. All of us on the bridge were peering into the darkness ahead; nobody spoke, and there was a tense silence, broken only by the sound of the wind and sea. In a moment a deafening explosion rent the air; the ship rocked, and I found myself pinned in a corner of the bridge by a 9-ft. rangefinder and mounting weighing several hundredweight which had toppled from its pedestal. At the same time a shower of broken glass came tinkling down on our heads from the shattered windows of the control-top aloft. A mine had exploded under our bows, one of several that had evidently been laid to block the gap between the minefields. *Canterbury* had escaped, though her paravanes had brought to the surface another mine which floated past unpleasantly close to us—the biggest mine I have ever seen.

The ship was immediately stopped, and *Canterbury* with the destroyers stood by us. It was found that we had been struck under the cable-lockers well for'ard: the cables had fallen through the hole made by the explosion, and were hanging through the bottom of the

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ship in bights. The bulkheads and decks were quickly shored up with large baulks of timber, while hammocks were thrust down into the hole in the bottom to do the utmost possible to prevent more water getting into the ship. Marvellous to relate, none of the men sleeping on the fore messdeck was killed, though most of them were flung out of their hammocks, and cut or bruised. The captain's face had been cut by a splinter of glass, as also had been my trousers and leg when the rangefinder and its mounting fell on top of me. Our paravanes were out and running when we struck the mine, though it is possible that in the slight swell the ship's bows may have come down on top of the mine between the paravanes.

At ten o'clock, after twenty-five minutes' work, *Centaur* got under way again, and managed to work up to a speed of 6–8 knots. The raid into the Bight was abandoned, and course set for the Humber, the nearest east-coast port, with *Canterbury* and the destroyers screening us. Luckily it was a dark cloudy night with no moon, but it was a most anxious time as, so far from the English coast and on the edge of Heligoland Bight, we were at the mercy of any lurking enemy submarine.

One of my sad duties that night was to throw overboard all the Mill's bombs: as the detonators had been inserted they were "live" and therefore dangerous.

During the night the wind and sea rose, until at daybreak the ship had to be turned stern to sea, as it was feared that the bulkhead abaft the

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hole in the bows would not hold. All that day we made no more than 4 knots stern first. Steering was very difficult owing to the torn bow-plates in the ship's side acting as a rudder: with the helm hard over to counteract this the ship was still inclined to wander in a circle, and we eventually had to steer with the engines. Two more light-cruisers and a number of destroyers came out from Harwich, so that we had in all three light-cruisers and a dozen or more destroyers to guard us on our 250-mile stern-first journey to safety.

Early on the second morning tugs picked us up off the mouth of the Humber, and took us up to Immingham dock, where we arrived at 8.30 on June 15. Here we disembarked all our ammunition, and two days later went up to dock at Hull.

When the ship was examined in dry-dock it was found that her stem-casting was fractured, and as this necessitated making a new casting—a two or three months' undertaking—we feared that we should pay off, and be sent to join other ships. However, it was eventually decided that *Centaur* should not pay off, and she spent over three months at Hull. As much leave as possible was given to the officers and men, and I managed to have six weeks' summer leave, the first I had had for four years. During my leave I went up in an aeroplane for the first time, and flew 4,000 feet over my home.

The weeks that we were obliged to spend in the ship in dock as Commanding Officer were none too pleasant; pouring rain most of the time,

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with an incessant racketing noise of pneumatic riveting and hammering day and night. Hull docks are a long tram journey from the town through a squalid slummy quarter, and Hull itself is not an attractive city in which to spend any length of time.

The new stem casting was fitted, and repairs completed by September 19, when the ship came out of dock. A further ten days' delay was caused by defects to the capstan-engine and rudder, and we eventually rejoined the Harwich Force on October 1, after three and a-half months' absence.

It was during this month that the first rumours of Germany's suing for peace reached us. But the Harwich Force continued as busy and as warlike as ever. On the 18th, two small coastal motor-boats were hoisted on board light-cruisers and taken over to Terschelling for a reconnaissance of Borkum Island: this, however, had to be abandoned on account of rough weather. Five days later the whole Harwich Force was again off Terschelling, towing seaplanes on lighters for further reconnaissance along the north German coast. This provoked enemy seaplanes to put in an appearance, and we fired on them at least a dozen times during the afternoon of October 24.

A week later I attended a discussion held in the Parkeston war-room on "Armistice terms": we came to the conclusion that no armistice with Germany was possible!

During the afternoon of November 7, while lying peacefully in harbour, a signal was received stating that an armistice had been signed between

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the Allies and Germany. Every syren of every ship in harbour made the fact known as loudly as possible, and it was not until the evening that a further signal in contradiction of the first cut short our premature celebrations.

So the next day we were out off the Dutch coast again, carrying on with the war as a covering force for minesweeping operations, and to show that we *were* still at war, fired on two inquisitive German seaplanes which appeared. Those were the last shots we fired in the war, for that day we heard of the revolution in Germany, and of the Kaiser's abdication. The Harwich Force was ordered back to harbour with all despatch at five p.m., and arrived late that night.

Early next morning (November 11) the following message, timed 6.50 a.m., was received from Eiffel Tower wireless station :

> " Hostilities will cease upon the whole front from the 11th November, 11 a.m. (French time). The Allied troops will not cross until a further order the line reached on that date and hour."
>
> (Marshal Foch.)

Two hours later came a signal from the Admiralty :

> " The armistice is signed. Hostilities are to be suspended forthwith. All anti-submarine measures in force until further orders. Submarines on the surface are not to be attacked unless their hostile intention is obvious."

So ended the war after four years and a hundred days. *Centaur* celebrated the event by

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being "stand-by" ship at an hour's notice, so that none of us was able to go ashore.

At 9.30 the flag-signal "God save the King" was flown by all ships in harbour, and at 11.30 lower decks were cleared and three cheers given for H.M. the King. Having thus given vent to our feelings the officers assembled in the captain's cabin to do honour to the occasion in champagne. The sailors celebrated the armistice in similar fashion that night by "splicing the main brace," the first time I had known this done since I joined the Service. (To the uninitiated, "splicing the main brace" means the issue of a double tot of rum.)

Between nine and ten o'clock that night all the syrens of the Harwich Force were in full blast, cruisers, destroyers, depôt-ships, and even little trawlers making the night hideous with more noise than any war-time syren recall ever made. One of the tugs even went so far as to raise steam and, having done so, played "God save the King" in the Morse code on her syren until steam ran down! Every form of firework, rocket, and Very's light was fired, and it was said that when the duty division of destroyers was ordered to sea the following day frantic signals were flying round the harbour asking if any ship had any private recognition signal grenades left to lend them. To finish the night's celebrations a party of us went over to the *Dragon* in fancy dress to help them make more noise!

A year ago that Armistice Day I was torpedoed in the *Staunch* off the Palestine coast.

On the 13th the following message was sent

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by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to the Royal Navy:

"The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty desire heartily to congratulate the officers and men of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines upon the triumph of the Allied cause in the realization of which they have played so splendid a part, adding lustre throughout to the great traditions of the Service to which they belong.

Their Lordships feel that after four years of ceaseless vigilance relaxation of war conditions cannot but be eagerly desired by officers and men, and they may be relied upon to grant leave and modify war routine immediately circumstances permit.

For the present, however, with German submarines possibly still at sea and ignorant of the armistice, with the work of escorting ships to be surrendered or returned devolving largely on the British Navy, and with the full capacity of the minesweeping required for clearing the seas, it is plain that no officers or men can be spared from their various duties until the safety of the country at sea is assured.

The Navy has in time of peace to be ready for war in a sense which land forces cannot be; now that peace is again in prospect it may prove that even after the troops in the field are enjoying a relief from tension the Navy must for a time continue its war-routine.

If so, their Lordships are confident that this will be cheerfully accepted as being at once the burden and privilege of the Empire's first line of defence."

Centaur assumed her "burden and privilege" that very day by again doing duty of "stand-by" ship and giving no leave: we even spent four

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hours at sea carrying out gunnery and torpedo exercises, evidently so as to be ready for the next war.

However, two days later the state of immediate readiness in which we had been living for so long was relaxed, and leave was granted until ten p.m., a great concession which enabled us to dine ashore. It was more in such small matters as this than in any drastic alteration in our mode of life that we chiefly noticed the change from war to peace conditions. As the Admiralty said in their message to the Fleet: "The Navy has in time of peace to be ready for war. . . ." Thus our life on board went on much as before, except for the welcome opportunities of longer leave ashore.

Apropos of this, during the war I used to meet Army officers home from France, and compared notes with them as regards the life we led in war-time in our respective Services. They could not understand how, in the Navy, we could endure life afloat with its ever-present danger of being blown up by mine or torpedo: they would far sooner have been in the trenches. My point of view was that, provided one was able to be fatalistic about the danger of being blown up at sea, life on board was only what we had been accustomed to in peace-time. One might, and often did, get wet through on the bridge, but at any rate there was always a warm cabin and bed to go to, even though the bed may have been heaving up and down with the motion of the ship. We had our meals regularly too. Compare this with the life of an officer in the

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trenches, standing wet through in mud and rain, often under fire, and never knowing for certain where his next meal was coming from. I would not have changed places with any soldier.

In fulfilment of the Admiralty's dictum that it was upon the Navy that the assurance of the safety of the country at sea depended, we sank a mine by rifle fire just outside Harwich on November 18.

It is well known that a toast often honoured in German naval messes, even before the war, was that of "Der Tag"—the day when they should meet, and, as they hoped, defeat the British Fleet in battle. That day never dawned for them. For the Harwich Force "Der Tag" was Wednesday, November 20, 1918. On that morning *Curacoa*, flying the flag of Sir Reginald Tyrwhitt, *Coventry*, *Danae*, *Dragon*, *Centaur*, and sixteen destroyers received the surrender of the first batch of twenty German submarines.

The squadron had been anchored overnight in the Sledway, between Harwich and Orfordness. When we weighed at five a.m. it was still dark, with a low-lying mist which limited the visibility to about three miles. The five light-cruisers steamed down the swept channel in line-ahead at 15 knots with a division of destroyers screening on either beam. A few floating mines were sighted and sunk. The prearranged rendezvous at which the German submarines were to be met was a point about 20 miles east of Orfordness; the time 7.30 a.m.

An incongruous spectacle was provided by the bowler hats of several press photographers

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drifting about the ship in the dim early morning light.

Shortly after seven o'clock a ship was sighted on the starboard bow, and immediately afterwards, out of the mist, appeared the long, low, wicked-looking shapes of the U-boats following astern of their escort-vessel.

Though this was the end of four years' warfare, and of month after month of anti-submarine escort and patrol duty, and even though I had been torpedoed by one, this was the first sight I had ever had of a German submarine.

All our ships were at "action" stations, with guns and torpedo-tubes loaded, ready to frustrate any last desperate trick that the Germans might resort to. We steamed past the long line of twenty U-boats in a chilly silence. Most of our minds must have gone back to the foul deeds of murder on the high seas, torpedoing of defence-less hospital- and passenger-ships, shelling of boatloads of survivers, and the many other crimes committed by German submarine commanders during the last four years.

Dragon and two destroyers were detailed to lead the German escort-vessel through the swept channel to the appointed anchorage, while the remaining destroyers rounded up the U-boats into divisions of five boats, with a destroyer to lead each division. The submarines and their escort ship disappeared into the mist astern at 7.40. The squadron then turned back, and increased speed to 18 knots until they again overtook the submarines, when speed was reduced to 9 knots to keep abreast them. They were

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on our port beam, silhouetted against the early morning sun with their officers and men on deck.

One could not but wonder what their feelings must have been at this ignominious surrender. In many cases I believe the German submarine commanders had refused to remain in command of the boats at their surrender, and they were sent over with scratch officers and crews. One of the U-boats to be surrendered on the 22nd blew up on the way across: this may or may not have been a deliberate act. It was significant that the number of each U-boat had been painted out.

At 10.15 the submarines with their attendant destroyers and light-cruisers anchored in the Sledway, and while a rigid airship, a "Blimp," and several seaplanes flew overhead, British submarine crews were put on board each U-boat by motor launches. As soon as the British crews had taken charge the White Ensign was hoisted in each submarine and, with the German crews lined up on deck—they were not allowed below in case of foul play—the twenty surrendered U-boats proceeded into Harwich. Few of them flew any ensign when they were taken over, though in one or two cases where the German Naval Ensign was flying this was not hauled down, but the White Ensign was hoisted above it.

The German escort-ship, suitably guarded, was left at anchor outside to await the return of the submarine crews.

The captain of each boat was required to furnish the British officer taking over with a signed statement that his boat was in efficient

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running order, periscopes undamaged, war-heads off the torpedoes, of which there was to be the full number on board, and no infernal machine concealed in the boat. A complete list of officers and men comprising the crew had also to be handed to him. Some of the German officers seemed reluctant to carry out these orders, but in all cases I believe it was done satisfactorily, if unwillingly.

There were some attempts by the Germans at fraternization, but these were repulsed by our men. One case occurred of a German officer wishing to shake hands with a British officer, who refused to do so.

The surrendered submarines were berthed in the River Stour above Parkeston, and their crews were immediately transferred to destroyers which took them to their escort-ship anchored outside for passage back to Germany. They passed quite close to us on their way down harbour, and we saw the officers and men huddled together amidships, while the British stood coldly aloof.

On five subsequent days up to the 1st December the Harwich Force carried out this same procedure in receiving the surrender of German submarines, until there were 122 U-boats moored in the river. On one of these occasions I had to go on board the German escort-ship to give certain orders to one of her officers, the first time I had met a German naval officer face to face since the war started.

Numbers of the submarines were towed to various ports round the British Isles, and there

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exhibited. I had the opportunity of seeing the long lines of deserted, rusting U-boats up the river, and went on board some of them. About a month later I was able to see over *U* 135, which was moored alongside Parkeston quay. All these boats were thoroughly examined by our submarine officers, and though they found them very dirty, I believe a fair amount of technical knowledge was gained.

On November 21 the naval censorship came to an end, and we were at last free to mention in our letters our doings and the places we visited.

Late on the night of December 2 *Coventry* and *Centaur* suddenly received steaming orders for the next morning, with instructions to have as much provisions on board as possible. Sailing at eleven a.m. for Copenhagen at 23 knots, we rounded the Skaw, the northernmost point of Denmark, on the afternoon of the following day, and anchored in Aalborg Bay for the night, as it was inadvisable to pass through the Sound in the dark owing to danger from mines. Copenhagen was reached on the afternoon of the 5th, and there we replenished with oil-fuel. We were delayed for twenty-four hours by fog, and eventually sailed for Danzig on the morning of the 7th, anchoring that night off Stolpmünde on the German (Pomeranian) coast, west of the Gulf of Danzig. Next morning we weighed at six o'clock and reached Neufahrwasser at eleven, in a temperature seven degrees below freezing-point, with a fringe of frozen spray icicles round the foremost gun and bridge.

Neufahrwasser is the port of Danzig, and lies

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at the sea end of the canal joining these two places: at that time it was in East Prussia. *Coventry* and *Centaur* berthed in the canal alongside the railway goods-yard, opposite the station of Neufahrwasser. The Danish hospital-ship *Russ* and another smaller Danish ship were also lying alongside, waiting to embark released Allied prisoners of war from the prison-camps in this part of Germany. Our presence here was evidently to preserve order, for soon after the revolution had broken out in Germany and the armistice was signed, numbers of Allied prisoners broke out of their camps and started forcibly to express their long-pent-up hatred of their captors. So I expect the Germans themselves were as glad to have us there to keep the peace as were our Allies.

In order to be prepared for trouble ashore, we had landing-parties detailed, and sentries were posted on the gangway. No leave was given, and armed watch was kept day and night. There were also German sentries posted on the quay opposite where our two light-cruisers were lying. An amusing incident occurred alongside the *Coventry* where the beat of one of the German sentries lay. As he paced up and down *Coventry's* sailors were leaning over the side calling him "Fritz," and generally ragging him. At last he became so exasperated with their taunts that he turned round, flung his rifle on board the *Coventry*, and with an explosive "Damn ze war, damn ze Kaiser," stalked off, followed by mocking jeers and laughter from the sailors.

All day long the jetty was lined with

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inquisitive staring Germans who looked half-starved, as no doubt they were owing to our blockade.

A number of released French prisoners of war had already arrived, and we invited them on board after dinner. The British prisoners were not due to arrive until next day, when at five o'clock in the morning I was awakened by loud cheering. A train of 440 British officer prisoners had just come in, and as one of them told us later, he could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the White Ensigns of two British warships within a hundred yards of where the train stopped. We had purposely kept our Ensigns flying all night. This officer had to come across to the jetty to make certain his eyes were not deceiving him, and when he returned to the train and told the others they gave such a cheer as awakened most of us. They went straight on board the Danish hospital-ship *Russ*, and many of them came over to visit us during the day: from them we heard of their life in various German prison-camps, where some of them had been for four years.

About four p.m., just as it was getting dark, the smaller of the two Danish ships sailed for Dunkirk with the French released prisoners. As they passed us our band played the "Marseillaise," while *Coventry* hoisted the French tricolour at the masthead, and illuminated it with a small searchlight. Our sailors cheered, and the Frenchmen cheered back hilariously.

We had six British officers on board to dinner that night: it must have been the first good

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meal they had had for months, even years. After dinner many more came over until there was barely standing room in the mess. They were rather chary about accepting drinks: as one of them rather pathetically explained, they had not touched alcohol for such a long time that they were afraid of its effects. We did everything in our power to help them and cheer them up, but one could not help noticing that they were very constrained in their joy. I think they hardly realized that they were free again. One officer said that the *Centaur* was the first "bit of England" he had set eyes upon for many, many months: another remarked, "I only hope I don't wake up."

Shortly before eleven that night a second train arrived with about 1,200 British "Tommies." We had been expecting them, and when the train stopped abreast the ship in the blaze of our searchlights, again the first thing that they saw was the two British warships with their largest White Ensigns and Union Jacks flying and illuminated. Our sailors gave them a tremendous roar of welcome, which the poor Tommies could only answer feebly.

The sight of these poor lads poking their pale starved faces out of the carriage windows was too pitiful. They had been crowded twenty in a carriage in a temperature below freezing-point for over twelve hours, and were so weak, and cold, and cramped that many of them had to be carried out of the train. Our surgeon was ashore with stretcher parties to take the worst cases on board the *Russ*, while there were plenty

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of willing helpers among the sailors. It was pathetic to see those poor men being helped out of the train by our sailors: their white, pinched, haggard-looking faces, with despair written in their eyes, hardly seemed to show that they realized they were at last free. There they were, dressed in the most miserable rags of uniform, some so weak that they could scarcely walk the bare three-hundred yards from the train to the hospital-ship, much less drag their ragged bundles of personal belongings with them.

The sailors were splendid, and until one o'clock in the morning were ashore helping the Tommies on board the *Russ*. All this time, too, our band was on the jetty playing alternate tunes with the Danish band in the hospital-ship, while our men cheered and sang and helped. Until those 1,200 poor fellows were safely on board the *Russ* I am sure most of them were in such a state of exhaustion that they could not believe the evidence of their senses—that they were out of German hands and no longer prisoners, that there really *were* British warships alongside and British sailors to meet them. To many of them it must merely have meant being shifted from one prison-camp to another. However, such was the infection of the sailors' cheery welcome that at last one began to hear some of the typical "back-chat" associated with the British Tommy who refuses to be down-hearted. A voice from the hospital-ship would shout:

"Are we down-hearted?"

And from our sailors ashore would come an answering roar of "*No!!*" Then followed

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cheering and singing of "Tipperary," "Back to Blighty," and other songs of the war.

A Brigadier-General who was among the officers released made a speech from the deck of the *Russ*, in which he said that it was with great pride and joy that they were at last going home victorious, more especially that the British Navy, which for the last four years had ruled the seas, was there to meet them and see them safely off home.

In charge of the train which brought our prisoners was a German guard of an officer and about a dozen men. While the Tommies were being transferred to the hospital-ship these Germans stood arrogantly about with their rifles slung over their shoulders. In contrast to the pitiable, defenceless state of our Tommies the insolent attitude of the German guard made our blood boil, and we regarded their presence as adding insult to injury. For myself, I was so filled with pity at seeing our Tommies in that deplorable state, and with rage at the nation that had treated them so, that I felt that I wanted to *kill* a German with my own hands. Most of us felt likewise, and our officers, sailors, and marines on the jetty hustled the German guard aside at every opportunity. It was more than M———'s hot Irish blood could stand, and he seized one of the German soldier's rifles from him and walked off on board with it as a souvenir. When Mr. P——, the Danish gentleman in charge of the repatriation of our prisoners, heard of this incident he was most concerned, and asked M—— to give the rifle back to the German soldier: he said that

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he was afraid that there might be trouble, and that the Germans might revenge themselves on the remaining British prisoners yet to be released. M—— eventually saw the force of this argument, and reluctantly surrendered his souvenir rifle, on the understanding that the German guard was removed. Fortunately this was done, as their presence had so inflamed our feelings that I should not have been at all surprised if our sailors had taken the law into their own hands and removed the German guard by force—probably over the quay-side into the canal.

By this time, soon after midnight, when all the Tommies were safely on board the *Russ* and we could do no more to help them, our activities sought a fresh outlet. We began to look for trouble. Neufahrwasser station, about two-hundred yards from the ship, was gaily decorated with German flags in celebration of the armistice. Here was an object for a raid, and a party of our officers set off with the intention of hauling down every German flag in sight. F—— swarmed up a flagstaff in the station entrance, cut down the German flag which was flying, and returned on board with it wrapped round him. With another of our officers I walked to the far end of the station platform and climbed over some railings on to a fence near one of the station buildings in an attempt to reach a flag which we had marked out for capture. The only means of reaching it was by climbing up a drain-pipe to the roof, but as this "made-in-Germany" drain-pipe was too weak to bear our weight we returned to the

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station and bade the stationmaster produce a ladder. Whether he was unable to understand my German, or whether he was merely obstinate I do not know, but no ladder was forthcoming, so we had to abandon our nocturnal exploit. On our way back to the quayside we found two of our officers "dealing with" a brand-new German motor-lorry which they had found on a truck in a siding. They successfully removed the rubber bulb of its horn, one of the headlight reflectors, and finally put it out of action by taking away the magneto. All of these trophies they took back on board. Next morning we had the unforgettable delight of watching the antics of two fat Germans, one nearly bursting himself at the starting handle in his efforts to start the engine, while the other stood by making copious notes in a book.

It was now 12.30 a.m., and we spent a short while longer on the jetty alongside the hospital-ship until the "Retire" was sounded, and we were obliged to return on board.

At 2 a.m. the *Russ* sailed for Leith. This huge white hospital-ship, taking nearly 2,000 released British prisoners "back to Blighty," moved slowly down the canal past *Centaur* and *Coventry*, who had switched on all their lights—red, green, and white lights on the masts, and searchlights illuminating every White Ensign and Union Jack that it was possible to fly. Our band was still going strong after nearly three hours, though little could be heard of it amid the roars of cheering from our soldiers and sailors. There would be occasional pauses when one

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heard remarks bandied across the water between the hospital-ship and the light-cruisers :—

"Good-bye, Jack," from the Tommies, and "Good-bye, Tommy," from our men. And from an Army officer—the finest compliment he could have paid us—

"Thank God, we've got a Navy."

The last remark that reached us as the *Russ* disappeared round the bend of the canal was :—"No more *Soo-oup*" (*fortissimo*).

That was not the end of that night's doings. At about 2.15, when we had at last gone to our cabins to turn in, we heard the bugle and the aft-deck sentry's shout, "Stand to arms." I seized my revolver and dashed up on deck to find the Marines with their rifles and bayonets tumbling up half-dressed from below, and other officers appearing dressed in pyjamas and revolvers. Apparently the watch on deck had heard shots fired ashore from the direction of the station. Knowing that M—— and H—— were still ashore souvenir hunting, we feared that they had got into trouble with the German sentries. M—— was so angry at having had to give up the German rifle he had seized that he had sworn not to go to bed until he had secured the largest German flag which was still flying over the station buildings.

The scene may be imagined. The captain and some half a dozen officers with their revolvers grouped round the gangway peering into the darkness of the station-yard; behind them the Marines fallen in with their rifles, the officer in command restraining their excited queries of,

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"Shall we load, sir? Shall we load?" There we were, all agog to get ashore and raise the devil. The captain evidently realized what had happened, if one may judge from his remark: "I expect it's that (adjectival) gunnery-lieutenant of ours."

In the midst of this scene of excitement up strolled M——, the officer in question, with his accomplice H——, M—— in evening dress and bare-headed, and each of them looking as pleased with himself as a dog with two tails. Oh no! they had heard no shot fired, and wanted to know what all the trouble was about!

Later, in the wardroom, M—— removed his coat, and unwound from round his waist the German flag which he had succeeded in capturing. While H—— had kept a look-out, M—— had swarmed up a flagstaff about thirty feet high, above the station roof, cut the halyards, and, as he described it with his usual disregard of the letter *g*—

"I gave a pull at one of the halyards and found that the flag went up, so I pulled the other one and away it came. The glorious feelin' of slidin' down again with the flag all round my head, not bein' able to see where I was goin', was simply toppin'."

They had heard no sound of firing, and were on their way back to the ship when they heard the "Call to arms" sounded. "This," as M—— described it, "put the wind up me proper," so they hurried on to find some two or three dozen armed officers and men to greet them.

I eventually turned in at 2.30, and had an

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hour and a-half's sleep before turning out at four to keep the morning watch. Between five and six a forlorn, half-starved little German kiddie came wandering down to the ship, and stood at the end of the gangway pitifully saying, "Brot, brot." Despite my mood of pugnacious hostility of a few hours previously, this was more than I could bear, so I sent below to get some bread to give to this poor child, and sent her away more or less happy. I had to risk the whole civilian population of Neufahrwasser coming *en masse* to demand "brot"; but, after all, it was through no fault of that innocent little mite that the war had happened, and she was desperately hungry.

The misdoings of that night were never *officially* known, though if the assortment of "pickelhaubes," German rifles, bayonets, flags, and even Iron Cross medal-ribbons, could have spoken they would have had many a story to tell. The Marines' trousers were suspiciously dusty, but none of us inquired where they had been. Rumour had it that two of our officers went up to Danzig, seven miles away, marched into a café, and made all the Germans stand up while they refreshed themselves with German beer! They also demanded, at the point of a revolver, such souvenirs of "pickelhaubes," rifles, etc., that any German soldiers they came across could supply. And, from what one heard, the victims were only too willing to oblige: they had had more than enough of war, and it was a case of "anything for a quiet life."

We managed to get away from Neufahrwasser

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without having provoked any international complications: *Coventry* and *Centaur* sailed for Copenhagen at noon on December 11, arriving there next morning in a snowstorm.

We spent four days at Copenhagen, which enabled us to see the city. My diary records that my first night ashore there was "hectic," and certainly the Danes were most kind and hospitable. It will be realized that this was the first time for months that we had had the chance of being ashore late, and in a gay city like Copenhagen it was small wonder that we made the most of it.

After buying some of the famous Royal Copenhagen porcelain we dined at the Café Nimb, and afterwards visited the Café Wivel in the Tivoli Gardens (a sort of "White City"), finishing up at the Palais de Danse. We made a triumphant, if noisy, progress through the snowy streets from one place of amusement to another in a dilapidated horse-cab. One of our party who had taken up a strategic position on the roof of the cab was subjected to a severe bombardment of snowballs by certain young Danes who saw (and heard) us going by! Having sampled the Palaise de Danse we drove down to the landing-place with our cargo of Copenhagen china miraculously still intact, only to find that there was a blizzard blowing in the harbour, our motor-boat's engine had refused duty, and that we should have to spend the night ashore. So back we went to our faithful cab, and so to the Hotel Angleterre by about midnight. Here we found all the rooms taken, but the manager

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eventually had two beds put in the best drawing-room for the three of us. Luckily I got an "outside berth," but F——, who was in the middle, hardly knew which bed he belonged to, and spent most of the night between them on the floor! He also complained that I made too much noise drinking out of the water-jug at two o'clock in the morning!

Two British transports, *Plassey* and *Mitau*, with released British prisoners of war on board, arrived on December 15, and we were detailed to escort the former to England. We left Copenhagen the next morning, and anchored before dark in Aalborg Bay to await the *Plassey*. She was delayed by a strike of her firemen, and a Marine armed guard from the *Coventry* had to be sent on board her before she could sail. We were most indignant at such behaviour in a British ship taking home our repatriated prisoners, and from what we heard later the Marine guard were none too gentle in their treatment of the mutinous firemen.

We picked up the *Plassey* on the morning of the 17th, and rounded the Skaw at nine o'clock. Numbers of floating mines were exploded and sunk that morning, and I fancy this had a certain salutary effect on the strikers in the *Plassey*. We crossed the North Sea in a gale, and reached the Firth of Forth on the evening of the following day. *Centaur* left again the next afternoon, and arrived again at Harwich in the morning to find the Harwich Force at twelve hours' notice, and half of the officers and men away on leave. I was not one of the fortunate ones to get leave, and spent Christmas at Harwich.

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A few days later we heard that *Centaur* with certain other light-cruisers had been selected for foreign service. So the famous Harwich Force broke up, and *Centaur* sailed for Chatham, berthing in the dockyard on the last day of 1918.

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CHAPTER VII

BATTLE-CRUISER FLAGSHIPS, 1919–1920

AFTER a very generous and welcome spell of leave I was appointed to H.M.S. *Lion*. She was the famous flagship of the Battle-Cruiser Squadron, of 26,350 tons, mounting eight 13·5-inch guns in four twin turrets, and sixteen 4-inch guns in two batteries. Ordered to join her at Scapa Flow, I travelled north by the naval train, a special train which ran from London to Thurso, in the extreme north of Scotland, throughout the war, and arrived late at night on March 18.

The Battle-Cruiser Squadron, consisting at that time of *Lion*, *Tiger*, *Princess Royal*, and *Renown*, was then based at Scapa as guard over the interned German Fleet. Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes hoisted his flag in the *Lion* on the 23rd.

Two days after joining we coaled ship, an unpleasant occupation in which, after having served in two oil-burning ships, I had not taken part for nearly two years.

I found myself one of half a dozen watch-keeping lieutenants with some thirty officers in all in the wardroom. It was my first big-ship wardroom, and such things as a billiard-table and a cinema on board were quite new to me. I had hardly time, however, to get to know the ship or my shipmates before, at the end of the month, I was detailed to

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command the ex-German trawler *Chirsin*, one of the German Fleet guard trawlers.

Chirsin was a wicked little ship. All the original sin of her German origin remained, not only in the last syllable of her name, but in her very plates and frames. Her windlass jammed on every possible occasion, particularly when I wanted to let go the anchor; her engines took an age to reverse; and in her steering-wheel, which it required two men to work, there were thirty-two turns from hard-a-starboard to hard-a-port. She was without doubt "made in Germany." Small wonder then that within a few days, when I was taking this unmanageable craft alongside the *Lion*, her engines refused to go astern, and I collided bows on with the ship, making a hole in her side. Poor old *Lion*, to suffer the indignity of being rammed and holed by an ex-enemy after all she had been through during the war, and on April Fool's Day too!

The interned German High Sea Fleet, comprising 11 battleships, 5 battle-cruisers, 11 light-cruisers, and about 50 destroyers, was anchored in Hoy Sound, the western entrance to Scapa Flow. Six trawlers were employed on guard duties, all of them ex-German ships with names ending in "sin"; an ironical fate indeed. Each trawler had an allotted patrol area, mine being the German cruiser section. No communication was permitted between any of the German ships, or with the shore, and no boat was allowed to be lowered. It was the duty of the guard-trawlers to see that no infringement of these orders took place.

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As second in command of the *Chirsin* I had a midshipman, and he and I shared one small cabin, little more than six feet square, below the wheelhouse. Our guard routine was twenty-four hours on, steaming slowly up and down the lines of German cruisers, and forty-eight hours off during which we completed with coal, water, stores, and provisions. The weather was not of the best, and we had several days of guard-duty in howling gales and snow squalls. Luckily *Chirsin* with her high turtle-back forecastle was a very weatherly ship: that, and the fact that her full speed was over twelve knots—a very good speed for a trawler—are the only good things that I have to say about her. When not on guard-duty I secured to a buoy near the *Lion* and went on board her to get a bath and a decent meal. For nearly six weeks I was unable to get ashore for exercise.

At the end of April the Second Battle Squadron arrived to relieve the battle-cruisers of the German Fleet guard, and on May 1, after a month in command of the *Chirsin*, I turned her over to the *Warspite*—thankfully, I may say. The battle-cruisers left Scapa that evening and moored below the Forth Bridge at Rosyth next morning.

For more than two months we remained there, only putting to sea on four occasions for gunnery or torpedo firings, just to "keep our hands in."

Besides my harbour watchkeeping duties I had charge of a division of seamen, and also of "X" turret's two 13·5-inch guns. On top of the turret, on a specially built launching-platform, was a "Camel" fighter-aeroplane. The first time I

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flew this machine off the turret I gave the order to slip rather too soon, before the pilot had his engine full on. The "Camel" ran off the platform along the guns trained over the ship's side, and dipped down to within a few feet of the water: however, the engine picked up and the machine soared up into the air, to my great relief. An aeroplane carried on a ship's turret is unable to land again in the ship: it lands ashore, and is brought off to the ship in a lighter from which it is hoisted on to the turret again.

Later on the pilot of this fighter-machine took me up in a D.H.9 aeroplane from Donibristle aerodrome, on the north side of the Firth of Forth: we flew 4,000 feet above the Forth Bridge and Rosyth dockyard, and at times were above the clouds. This was the second time I had flown.

Before long I began to find the life of a harbour watch-keeper very boring, nor could I find much interest in mustering the bags of clothing of the men of my division: in fact, I was beset by the dullness of this new peace after four years of war, and the monotony of the life of a "salt horse" officer in a big ship. I decided to specialize, and accordingly sent in an application to do a qualifying course in signals and wireless. In my spare time I began to improve my knowledge of signals, and learnt a certain amount about the theory of wireless telegraphy.

Being so much in harbour we got ashore a good deal, and played a lot of golf on the courses round Edinburgh, besides cricket and tennis. There were also delightful walks through Dalmeny estate, and on wet days one could always go

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up to Edinburgh, which was but nine miles away.

On June 14 we saw our two large airships *R* 29 and *R* 34 flying over Edinburgh and the Firth of Forth: four days later, as if to encourage Germany to make up her mind to accept the Allied terms of the Peace Treaty, *R* 34 was flying over Berlin. The time limit for acceptance was to expire at seven p.m. on the 23rd, and during the few days before that date the battle-cruisers were at short notice for steam in readiness for operation "X.Z." What dire threat was conveyed by those cryptic letters we had no means of knowing. However, it was not necessary to put it into effect, for at 6.55 p.m. on the 23rd came the signal, "Germany has accepted peace terms." Two days previously the German Fleet interned at Scapa had been scuttled, to my mind a very convenient solution of the problem of the ultimate disposal of the ships. The Peace Treaty was signed at Versailles on the 28th, and at six o'clock that evening we dressed ship overall and fired a 101-gun salute, the first and only time I have ever heard this done. The sailors "spliced the main brace" that night as had been done on Armistice Day.

On July 16 we left Rosyth, and next day, with the remainder of the Fleet, moored in review order off Southend for the peace celebrations. Detachments of seamen from ships of the Fleet were sent up to take part in a march through London: owing to an injury to my knee I was obliged, to my great disappointment, to remain on board.

The ships were open to visitors, and we had thousands of them on board the *Lion*. One of our

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petty-officers who was showing a party round the ship quite excelled himself in his efforts as guide. We had brought down from Rosyth a small Shetland pony and trap, which were housed in a temporary stable on the upper deck. The P.O. was holding forth at great length to his party of visitors about the fame and glory of the *Lion*.

"Yes," said he, "the *Lion* is such a big ship that the Admiral has to drive round the upper deck in a pony-cart every morning."

There is a limit to the credulity of even east-end trippers, and after all that he had told them, it would seem to have been reached. But our undaunted P.O., when he saw the looks of disbelief on their faces, just led them round to the other side of the deck and showed them the Shetland pony and cart.

The 19th was celebrated as the official Peace Day, and the Fleet was illuminated that night: the signal for switching on was the bursting of a "bouquet" of over a hundred rockets which were fired simultaneously by electricity from the *Queen Elizabeth*. There were also fireworks and illuminations ashore.

On the 21st an "At Home" was given on board the *Lion* for the officers and their friends, and next day the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London steamed round the Fleet in the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress*, and came on board us in the evening.

Two days later I spent some hours on Southend Pier doing the duty of piermaster, controlling the embarkation and disembarkation from the boats of the Fleet. There was such a throng of sight-

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seers on the end of the pier that I had to have the gangways roped off, and several of my sailors posted at each landing-place to keep the crowds back. In the midst of this seething mob an old woman thrust herself in front of me and said:

"I want to see my 'Erb."

Gathering that 'Erb was probably her son, I inquired what ship he was in.

"Ow! I dunno wot ship 'e's in: 'e's in forty-nine mess."

As that was all the information I could get from her, I was not able to help her much: I was sorry, as she had come halfway across the country to see her 'Erb.

The Fleet left Southend that evening for their home ports to give summer leave, *Lion* reaching Devonport the following afternoon. Owing to industrial disturbances in the coalfields, leave was postponed for a week, and a party of men from the *Lion* was sent up to the Yorkshire mines.

At the end of August the ship left Plymouth for the west of Scotland, calling at Weymouth and Torbay *en route:* I, however, did not rejoin her until September 20 at Lamlash. Two days later we met the *Queen Elizabeth* at Oban, where we were hospitably entertained by the residents. I attended an official luncheon given by the Provost to the Commander-in-Chief and other officers. We sat down soon after 1.30 and did not get up again until nearly a quarter to five. During those three hours we were given food and wine, haggis and whiskey, bagpipes and speeches. Most of the speeches were long, and seemed to concern the

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"Silent Navy." There was every reason for silence after that tremendous repast.

Leaving Oban on the morning of the 27th, the ship went south outside Ireland to Berehaven for a week, and thence, with brief calls at Queenstown and Plymouth, to Rosyth dockyard on October 8 to refit, the usual leave being given from there.

Lion was out of dockyard hands by the middle of November, and spent the next three weeks based on Invergordon doing gunnery practices. Whilst there S.M.S. *Baden*, one of the newest German battleships, which they had not succeeded in sinking at Scapa, was brought in, and many of us went over her, which was very interesting.

On December 7 *Lion* and *Tiger* proceeded to Scapa Flow, and for two days were engaged in "tidying up" the harbour after the sinking of the High Sea Fleet. From there we went south via the Irish Channel to Plymouth on the 12th for Christmas leave.

I spent six weeks in the ship lying alongside in the basin, before going on leave at the end of January, and I look back upon that time as the most disagreeable of the whole of my service. It rained unceasingly day after day: the monotony of long hours of day and night watch-keeping under dripping awnings was only broken by the unpleasantness of landing in charge of parties of men going through a musketry course at the Trevol rifle-range, or marching non-swimmers up to the swimming-bath at the Naval Barracks—always in pouring rain.

Christmas Day seems to have been slightly

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more cheerful, if one may judge from an entry in my diary:

"Dinner party at the Club. Returned on board three a.m. (Cat and umbrella.)"

The association between the cat and the umbrella remains wrapt in mystery to this day.

As it was generally too wet to go ashore we spent a good deal of time on board in the evenings producing and rehearsing—in the bathroom—a *revue*. This was written by one of our officers, who drew freely upon his imagination in combining "Chu Chin Chow" and "Aladdin and his wonderful lamp" with events of topical interest. Nothing was lacking from the beauteous heroine Zahrat-el-Rhubarb to a bevy of houris, and a portly but sprightly Spirit of the Lamp.

On the one and only night on which the show was given the curtain rose on Lord Majoribanks (myself) in his Piccadilly flat. Enter his valet (one of the snotties) with the evening paper and a cocktail. All this had been carefully rehearsed time after time, but the effect of that cocktail upon me had *not* been rehearsed. After two or three sips my initial stage-fright vanished, and I began discoursing volubly with the evening paper. My valet missed his next cue, and I was left rampaging about the stage in the throes of the most potent cocktail I have ever tasted, gagging furiously and talking the most utter nonsense to the audience. However, our *revue* was a great success, and the festivities ended in the small hours of the morning in visits by painted houris to sleeping officers in their cabins.

Lion and *Tiger* left Devonport on February 16

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for Spithead, where we lay for two weeks. From there we went up to Rosyth on March 4 to turn over to the *Hood*. She was lying in Rosyth dockyard when we arrived, and had recently commissioned for her trials, several of our officers and a number of men having left the *Lion* to join her early in the year. *Hood* sailed the following morning to do her steam-trials on the Clyde, and returned again to Rosyth three weeks later for her gun-trials.

I joined the *Hood* on March 29, and on the last day of the month *Lion's* glorious career came to an end, and she reduced to reserve complement and was laid up in Rosyth dockyard.

. . . . .

The largest and most powerful warship in the world, H.M.S. *Hood* was, at that time, the only capital ship of *post*-Jutland design built. Of over 40,000 tons displacement, 100 ft. beam, and nearly 300 yards in length, she could attain a speed of 30 knots. Her armament was eight 15-inch guns in four twin turrets, twelve 5·5-inch guns in two batteries, and four 4-inch anti-aircraft guns. She had a complement of about 40 officers and 1,500 men. A mighty ship, indeed, in her impression of speed and battle-power, yet, with her graceful yacht-like lines, of most handsome appearance.

Embodied in the design of the ship were the most up-to-date arrangements. The only coal used was for fireplaces in cabins and officers' messes: the ship's boilers were fired by oil-fuel, as also were those of the steamboats, the galleys (kitchens), and the bakery. Among other things

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hardly expected in a warship were a chapel, a laundry, a bookstall, reading and recreation rooms. A great feature down below was the height between decks, which was considerably greater than in most warships. The officers' cabins, too, were pleasantly large and airy, as were all living spaces.

In the days of William IV, that monarch, dining on board one of his wooden ships of war, rose to respond to the toast of his health, and in so doing bumped his royal head on the low beams of the deck above. As a result of that incident the officers of the Royal Navy were granted the privilege of remaining seated when the King's health is drunk on board His Majesty's ships. In the *Hood's* lofty wardroom, where the "ceiling" was considerably higher than in the average house, this jealously guarded privilege, though still observed, seemed to have lost its *raison d'être.*

Other innovations in the ship's *régime* included the systems of General Messing and Central Storekeeping. In this new scheme of messing, instead of the men arranging and preparing their own meals, and taking them to the galley to be cooked, the catering was done by the paymaster, the meals being prepared and cooked by the culinary staff according to a pre-arranged weekly menu. The result of this was that the sailors' food was not only better cooked, but was much more varied. Central storekeeping resulted in great economy in the use of all ship's stores. As is always the case, both these innovations gave rise to a good deal of comment at first, but they soon proved

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their worth, and have now been adopted throughout the Service.

During the six weeks that elapsed after I joined the *Hood* I was fully occupied in getting to know the ship thoroughly. To give some idea of the length of the various decks and the number of compartments which had to be visited in the course of "rounds" (inspection) during each night watch, it may be mentioned that this was a twenty minutes' walk. Drilling the twelve crews of the 5·5-inch guns of which I was in charge in action also took up a lot of my time. We were all very busy, though two of our officers found sufficient leisure in which to get married.

Hood left Rosyth on May 15 for Plymouth, where the next week was spent in taking in ammunition, stores, and fuel. In non-working hours the ship was crowded with visitors eager to see the latest addition to the Fleet.

The flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Roger Keyes had been hoisted in the *Hood* on the 18th, and from that date she became the new flagship of the Battle-Cruiser Squadron. Leaving Plymouth on the 29th, we put in at Portland for a few hours, and sailed the same night with the *Tiger* for a flag-showing cruise in the Baltic.

On the evening of May 31, the fourth anniversary of the Battle of Jutland, when the ship was passing through the very waters where that battle had been fought, a memorial service was held on the quarterdeck for the officers and men who had lost their lives: during the service the colours were half-masted, and on its conclusion the "Last Post" was sounded.

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Entering the Skaggerak that night the two battle-cruisers and seven destroyers passed through the Sound next day, and anchored in Kioge Bay, twelve miles south of Copenhagen, before dark. Here we remained for two days, one of which I still remember for having been awakened at four in the morning by several gallons of the Baltic Sea coming in through my open port and drenching me in my bunk. It was a very rude awakening, especially after having been present at a gunroom guest-night dinner a few hours previously.

The squadron left Kioge Bay early on June 4, and reached Kalmar, on the east coast of Sweden, in the evening. During the week-end which we spent there I went ashore with a party of about eighty men from our ships to compete against the local Swedish athletes in a sports meeting which they had arranged for us. It was a bitterly cold evening with drizzling rain, and we did not get the races started until nearly six o'clock. The idea of our hosts was to have, say, a couple of races, then half a "fotboll" match, a few more races, then the last half of the football match, finally ending up somewhere about midnight with the remainder of the races. However, I explained that we were unable to remain ashore so late, and hurried things on as best I could. Even so there were endless delays, and many of our sailors, tired of waiting about in the cold rain, disappeared. Those who did run, their baggy trousers tucked into their socks, and quite out of training, were no match for the semi-professional Swedish athletes in their spiked running shoes and shorts. The

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Swedes won every track event, though I am glad to say that we beat them 3–0 in the football match.

At the end of the meeting the President of the Sports Club told me that he would like to present our men with prizes—what for, I could not conceive. Imagine my consternation on looking round, to find barely a dozen sailors present: the remainder were nowhere to be seen. Bluff was the only way out of it, so I quickly arranged that any sailor, whatever part he had taken in the sports, should come forward as many times as necessary to receive a prize. By this ruse any embarrassment, either to our hosts or to ourselves, was avoided: it only remained to sort out the prizes afterwards and distribute them to their rightful owners. The finish up, the Swedes gave three "Rah's" for us, and in reply I proposed three cheers for Sweden, and the dozen remaining sailors cheered heartily.

Leaving Kalmar early on the morning of the 7th, we passed close by the mediæval town of Visby on the west coast of the island of Gothland, in the middle of the Baltic: the old town with its twelfth-century castle and churches was clearly visible, perched on a rocky eminence, almost overhanging the sea. *Hood* and *Tiger* anchored at Nynashamn the same evening, while *Spenser* and the seven destroyers proceeded up Stockholm fiord to the city itself. Nynashamn is a small village among pine-clad islands and creeks at the mouth of the fiord, some fifty miles from Stockholm. Owing to the narrow windings of the fiord it was not possible for the two battle-cruisers to accompany the destroyers, though there was

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plenty of depth of water. Three Swedish battleships were at anchor when we arrived, and, after the customary exchange of gun-salutes, I went on board the flagship *Aran* to return the official visit of the officer of the guard.

During our five days' stay we were most hospitably entertained by the Swedes, both in their ships and ashore, as well as up in Stockholm. Each day *Hood* and *Tiger* were open to visitors, hundreds of whom came down by train from Stockholm to see the ships.

H.M. King Gustav of Sweden honoured us with a visit, and remained on board to luncheon with the Admiral. Ships were manned, and royal salutes fired on his arrival and departure: his flag as a British Admiral of the Fleet was flown during his stay on board, and he wore the uniform of that rank.

A dinner party in the Swedish flagship that night was followed by a very cheery dance at a hotel ashore. At both these entertainments Swedish punch flowed freely, so that by the early hours of the morning we were speaking Swedish as easily as our hosts! Our knowledge of the language went little further, however, than the word "Skol," the Swedish equivalent of "Cheero!" in drinking a toast. This word is said to have its origin in the ancient Viking custom of drinking a health from a human skull.

In that latitude it is daylight until eleven p.m. and again from two a.m. onwards, so we can hardly have looked our best trudging back from a dance in gold-laced trousers along a dusty country road with the sun above the horizon. On arriving at

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the jetty to embark in our boat a certain officer would insist that the Admiral's barge waiting there was manned by a crew of monkeys. That Swedish punch again!

An "At Home" was given on board the *Hood* to which a special train brought several hundred guests from Stockholm, including officers of the Swedish Navy and Army, and representatives of the British and foreign legations with their ladies. The ship was looking her best in shining enamel paint, gleaming brasswork, and snowy-white scrubbed decks. The combined bands of the two battle-cruisers played on the quarterdeck, and there was tea and dancing. There must have been nearly a thousand guests on board, many more than we had expected, for the ices and cakes gave out and the tea ran short, so that we had to fall back on Marie biscuits.

Before the ship left I paid a visit to Stockholm, going up by the special train which had kindly been arranged for us by the Swedish authorities. The journey occupied about two hours through delightful wooded country and scattered farms, with a stop to replenish the tender with wood logs, no coal being used on that line.

Stockholm has been described as the "Venice of the north," and indeed is one of the finest capitals of northern Europe. It is situated at the head of a fiord in a setting of pine-clad islands, river, and lake. Part of the city is built upon islands joined to one another by bridges. There appeared to be no slums or suburbs. The imposing buildings of the city give place to attractive houses in large gardens on the shores

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of the fiord: many of these have their private harbours for motor-boats or yachts.

While walking about the city we met a Swedish gentleman who had been to our "At Home" in the ship the previous day, and who kindly took us round in his car and showed us everything there was to be seen. A few miles out we came to Djürgarden Island where, at Skansen (the Fortress), is a very fine park of some seventy acres laid out with a botanical garden, a Zoo, and an open-air museum typical of Swedish national life. Here we saw models of old wooden churches, bell-towers, farm-houses, barns, mills, and Laplanders' huts. At the highest point is a tower from which is a magnificent panorama of the city and the surrounding wooded shores of its fiord and islands.

We finished our tour of the island at the fashionable garden-restaurant of Hasselbacken, and from there went to dine at the flat of a Swedish naval officer and his wife. Their hospitality was almost overpowering, and in the course of an excellent dinner we were given Schnapps, beer, Madeira, claret, port, liqueurs, and Swedish punch in that order. Before we had time to recover from this we were motored out to Hasselbacken again to finish off the evening with champagne and strawberries. At that time of night the restaurant was crowded with all the *élite* of Stockholm society, among whom the ladies of that city may be numbered as the fairest of the fair.

Our train left at about midnight, and we got back on board again in sunshine.

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The squadron sailed that morning, the 13th, for a three days' visit to Apenrade, on the east coast of Denmark. Hitherto Apenrade had been a part of Schleswig-Holstein, but a recent plebiscite had resulted in its transference to Denmark. It was curious to learn that the Governor, who lunched with our Admiral on board, had been conscripted by the Germans during the war, and had fought against us in the trenches. The weather during our stay was very hot, and instead of going ashore, we spent our time in sailing and bathing.

At the end of the war there remained in the naval service a number of trawlers and drifters surplus to minesweeping and patrol requirements. Certain of these craft were allotted to the Atlantic Fleet, and one detailed as tender to each capital ship, cruiser-squadron, and destroyer-flotilla. Of about 200 tons, 90 ft. in length, and with a speed of 8 knots, they were officered and manned by the ships to which they were attached, and followed them round from port to port. These Fleet drifters proved to be of the greatest use for landing libertymen, bringing off stores and provisions, and generally supplementing the work of the ships' boats.

It was in command of *Hood's* drifter *Halo* that I made the passage from Apenrade to Copenhagen, with the *Tiger's* drifter in company. Our route lay across Kiel Bay, through the Fehmarn Belt, thence to the southward of Laaland Island, and finally northwards into the Sound, where we rejoined the ship off Copenhagen on the night of the 18th.

From the battle-cruisers' anchorage outside

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the harbour there is a fine view of the copper-green domes of the city. The destroyers were berthed inside the harbour alongside the Langelinie. Close by this quay is a most beautiful bronze statue of the naked figure of a girl sitting on a rock at the water's edge. Its delightfully natural setting gives it a simple charm seldom found in the more conventional type of statuary: the figure seems almost to be alive and to have come up out of the water to rest awhile on the rock before swimming away again.

On the day following our arrival the ship was inspected by H.M. King Christian of Denmark. He was received with a royal salute and by a guard-of-honour of a hundred Royal Marines, who made a most imposing spectacle drawn up on the *Hood's* quarterdeck. That night a royal dinner-party was given at the Palace to which a number of our officers were commanded, followed by a ball at the Hotel Angleterre which was attended by members of the Danish royal family. Though dancing on a marble floor was somewhat tiring, we were so loth to leave when the orchestra stopped at one a.m. that one of our officers prolonged the revels for half an hour by taking his place at the piano. My own reluctance to leave was due to the charms of a certain Girl in Blue to whom I had been introduced by the Crown Prince.

For the second day in succession the King of Denmark visited the ship and, with the Queen and other members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister, the British Minister and certain of the diplomatic corps, remained to luncheon with the Admiral.

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That evening I was ashore on duty in charge of the naval patrol in the city, responsible for the maintenance of order among the libertymen of the squadron. Our headquarters were in the Tivoli Gardens, a large entertainment park with cafés, dancing halls, ornamental gardens, and lakes, all of which were illuminated at night. When one considers the opportunities there are in a foreign port for the sailor to get into trouble ashore, and the too generous hospitality in the way of drinks which is offered him, it is no mean tribute to the British bluejacket to say that his behaviour is excellent: he realizes the prestige attached to the White Ensign, particularly on these flag-showing cruises, and, to his credit, he invariably plays up to it. Out of some hundreds of men ashore that night I found only two at all the worse for liquor. One of them was really very amusing in his efforts to keep his balance on a rolling barrel, a hard-enough feat when strictly sober, and doubly so when he had probably drunk a large part of its contents. But though amusing, it was hardly edifying, and I was obliged to cut short the entertainment. Marching back to the harbour with the patrol at about midnight, a young girl called out as we passed:

"Good-night. You are all darlings."

Who can say that the sailor's life is not fraught with peril?

An "At Home," similar to that given at Stockholm, was held in the *Hood* before we left. By allowing for at least half as many guests again as were invited we managed this time not to run short of tea: there must have been over a

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thousand on board. It was a perfect day, hot and sunny and calm, and our huge quarter-deck—it is a hundred yards long—presented a gay scene with its flag decorations, and band playing under the shining muzzles of the 15-inch guns, and the ladies in their bright summer frocks dancing with our officers in uniform.

We sailed for Christiania on the evening of the 23rd, and picked up a pilot at the entrance of the fiord early next morning. While stopped we noticed the lights of a small vessel close by: this, the pilot informed us in his broken English, was a "floating pub," a trawler engaged in selling spirits, then contraband in Norway.

Christiania fiord runs roughly north and south for fifty miles: the first part of the outer fiord is some ten miles broad, and the ship threads her way among wooded islands. Between Moss on the starboard hand and Horten to port the fiord narrows to a width of about three miles: on either side the hills, thickly covered with birch and pine-woods, slope down to where little fishing villages nestle at the water's edge. After passing through this channel the fiord opens out again. Here, a few miles from Horten, we came in sight of the Swedish naval base and dockyard of Karl Johansvärn, and away in the distance the entrance to Drammen fiord. A few miles farther on comes the narrowest part, a strait nearly ten miles long and but half a mile wide, with 600 feet of water under the ship's bottom. With the wooded shore slipping close past on either side, the *Hood* pursued her stately way through this narrow channel. At each little village we passed were

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crowds of cheering Norwegians, some of whom even swam out towards the ship. At every white flagstaff among the trees the Norwegian flag was flying, and dipped in salute to us as we went by: this continued for a whole hour.

It was a wonderful welcome, and to those ashore the mighty *Hood*, the largest warship in the world, winding her way through those land-locked waters must have been a magnificent sight. Beyond Dröbak the fiord widens again until, at the head of a bay studded with pine-clad islands and backed by pine-clad hills, one comes to the city of Christiania, in recent years re-named Oslo after the old town founded there in the middle of the eleventh century.

The squadron arrived soon after three o'clock in the afternoon. We approached the anchorage amid a swarm of yachts, sailing boats, motor-boats, and canoes which had come out into the bay to meet us, cheering and waving a welcome. Conspicuous among our escort was a girl in a brilliant red bathing-dress to match the colour of her canoe: in this frail craft she kept pace with the *Hood* until the ship anchored, and not even the noise of our gun salute frightened her away.

All that evening the ship was surrounded by the youth and beauty of Oslo in motor-boats and canoes, while big sailing yachts with parties on board passed close by. The snotties had the time of their lives fishing for "mermaids" out of the stern ports: by means of chocolates balanced on the blades of oars they lured the fair Norwegian damsels in their canoes close to the ship, and made them promise to come on board

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and dance after dinner. The British Consul had rashly said that he would be able to provide at short notice at least fifty Norwegian ladies who could dance. We kept him to his word, and within a few hours of our arrival they and the "mermaids" were dancing on our quarter-deck.

Two days later H.M. King Haakon of Norway came on board in the forenoon to inspect the ship, and was received with the customary ceremony of a royal salute and guard of honour. The following day, a Sunday, King Haakon, Queen Maud, and Prince Olaf honoured us with their presence at church at eleven o'clock and, after lunching with the Admiral, remained on board until four o'clock, when they went over to the *Tiger* for tea.

Hood was open to visitors each afternoon, and they came off in their thousands in our picket-boat, drifter, and in their own boats: on the first day over three thousand visited the ship.

The "At Home" which was held in the *Hood* proved an even greater success than the previous ones at Stockholm and Copenhagen: Queen Maud attended, and several of our officers had the honour of dancing with her. Many of our fair friends enjoyed themselves so much that they returned to an impromptu dance on the quarter-deck after dinner, evidently not having had enough dancing earlier in the evening.

The whirl of social activities did not leave much time for sight-seeing, though I managed to spend one afternoon ashore in this manner. Landing at Piperviken, near the old fortress of Akershus, one

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comes to the splendid main street of the city, Karl Johans Gaden, which runs in a straight line to the imposing Royal Palace at its western end. Facing the shops and hotels on this street are promenades and gardens where the band plays, and where the rank and fashion of Oslo society may be seen strolling up and down.

We were interested in seeing one of the old Viking ships, which had been excavated and preserved in a museum. To give an idea of the size of these ships in which the Vikings crossed the North Sea in olden days it may be mentioned that this particular ship was 172 feet in length, with a beam of 66 feet. She was, of course, propelled by oars or sails. It was curious to notice that her rudder, contrary to usual custom, was fitted to right (starboard) of the fore-and-aft line of the ship: it has been suggested that in this may lie the origin of the word "starboard," derived from "steerboard," or rudder.

From Majorstuen on the outskirts of the city an electric train took us in half an hour to the terminus near the top of Holmenkollen, a fir-crowned hill which overlooks Oslo from the westward. From the summit, a thousand feet above sea-level, is a magnificent view of the fiord with its wooded shores and islands. Far below could been seen a big log jam, where hundreds of pine-logs had been floated down from the surrounding forests, which extended in all directions as far as the eye could see. Paths through the woods lead from Holmenkollen to Voxenkollen and Frognersaeter, some 500 feet higher. Picturesque log-built chalet-restaurants are found in clearings

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in the woods, and the twin steel lattice masts of Holmenkollen wireless station tower high above the trees. In winter this part is a famous winter-sports resort: a bob-run several miles long winds down through the trees where, on our way back, we also saw one of the big ski-jumps.

Two nights before we left *Tiger* gave a most enjoyable dance on board. On our last night a party of seven of us, with seven Norwegian girls, motored out to dine and dance at a big country house a few miles outside the city. Late in the evening, somewhere about nine o'clock, our hostess showed us into a small dining-room where every imaginable kind of cold fish and salad dish was laid out on a large table. We thought it curious that no places were laid at the table and that there were no chairs to sit upon, but we did our best standing up. When we had eaten our fill—it was late and we were hungry—our hostess led us through into the adjoining room for dinner. Our ignorance of the customs of the country had made us suppose that the stand-up meal to which we had just done justice was the dinner itself, whereas it was merely "smögbrot," a preliminary *hors d'œuvres*. The evening passed very gaily with music and dancing, and at about midnight we returned on board, some of the girls accompanying us to continue dancing on the quarter-deck until one a.m.

We thoroughly enjoyed our six days' stay at Oslo, and no better evidence of our enjoyment can be given than the concluding remarks of one of my letters:—

"I haven't had more than four hours' sleep per

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night for years, it seems—but the Norwegian girls are worth it every time."

I left Oslo next morning, July 1, in command of *Hood's* drifter *Halo*, bound for Grimsby, where she was to be docked and have a new propeller fitted: two subs. accompanied me. By the evening we were clear of the fiord and steamed all night along the south coast of Norway, leaving it early next morning off Christiansand on a south-westerly course for the North Dogger Bank light-vessel. Except for a slight sea and head swell the weather was good, and we picked up the light-vessel at four o'clock on the second morning out. From there course was set for the Humber estuary. I well remember having chicken and rhubarb tart for supper that night, balancing ourselves on the bridge as we ate it. The weather still remained fine, with not so much motion as to prevent our enjoyment of these delicacies.

After but a few hours' sleep in my clothes I was awakened early in the morning by one of the subs. who sent down to tell me that we had run into fog. When I got up to the bridge I found the little ship pushing along through an oily swell in a damp raw fog: the visibility was less than a hundred yards, and at intervals the dismal hooting of steamers' syrens could be heard around us. From this I judged we were somewhere near the east coast traffic lane, and though I had expected to make a landfall within a few hours, there was no means of telling our position off the coast. It was evident, however, that we were closer inshore than I had expected, so we proceeded cautiously, sounding continuously. My luck was

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in that morning, for before long, out of the fog ahead, appeared a black conical buoy with the magic word "Protector" painted on it in large white letters. The chart showed this to be a few miles to the southward of the entrance of the Humber, in shallow water off the Lincolnshire coast.

Having thus fixed our position we anchored and waited for the fog to lift. I then had leisure to realize the Providence which had brought us within sight of that well-named "Protector" buoy. After steaming about two hundred miles across the North Sea from our last known position off the North Dogger Bank light-vessel, our course had brought us to this buoy: in that fog, had we happened to have been a hundred yards to the northward or southward we should not have sighted the buoy and, but for the warning given by soundings, might easily have run ashore.

Lying at anchor, with an impenetrable white wall of fog around us, we could hear the wailing of syrens of ships under way and the clanging fog-bells of others at anchor: after a time, by listening intently, we could also pick out the distinctive note of the Humber lightship's foghorn. Later in the forenoon the fog lightened and finally lifted, and we weighed and joined the procession of coasting steamers and trawlers up the Humber estuary. We arrived off Grimsby soon after noon, but having missed the morning tide owing to the fog were obliged to anchor until we could get into the basin on the evening tide.

We remained at Grimsby for a week, the two subs. and I living in an hotel ashore. *Halo* was

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docked and a new propeller fitted, and we sailed to rejoin the *Hood* at Invergordon on the evening of the 13th. Again we were favoured with good weather, and with her new propeller *Halo* kept up a steady eight knots: on our passage across the North Sea from Olso she had made good 7½ knots, though the engines had to be run faster. We reached Invergordon in two days, and when, on the 16th, *Hood* and *Tiger* arrived from Scapa Flow, we returned to our ship.

The next fortnight was spent in gunnery exercises at sea and regatta training in harbour. We sailed from Invergordon on the night of August 3, and at noon on the sixth anniversary of the declaration of war against Germany received the surrender of the German battleships *Helgoland* and *Westfalen*, with twelve German destroyers, at the entrance to the Firth of Forth. The surrendered ships were anchored off Burntisland early next morning, and the day was spent in searching them before finally taking them over.

During our stay at Rosyth we lived in an atmosphere of rumour as to our future movements: there seemed a possibility of the ship being ordered to the Baltic again in connection with some trouble between Poland and Soviet Russia. However, all this came to nothing, and we received orders to proceed to Lamlash on the Clyde. Before leaving, four Army officers from the Staff College at Camberley came to spend a week in the ship, "just to see what the Navy does": their education began well with a "rough house" in the wardroom the first night they joined.

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Leaving Rosyth on the morning of the 10th we passed through Pentland Firth that night, and reached Lamlash with the flotilla-leader *Shakespeare* late the next evening. We spent a fortnight there, and carried out full-speed turning trials in the Clyde while the airship *R* 33 flew overhead and took observations: steaming at 30 knots with the helm hard over, the ship heeled over like a yacht. There was a certain amount of entertaining both on board and ashore: the ship was open to visitors, and hundreds of Glasgow trippers came over from the mainland. Ashore one or two dances were given, an athletic-sports meeting held, and we played a good deal of golf.

The ship left on the 26th for Penzance, spending a few hours at the Scilly Isles *en route*. We anchored in Mounts Bay, Penzance, after dark, to the accompaniment of a voluble flow of abuse from the local fishermen whose unlighted nets, laid out in the bay, we were unable to avoid in the dark.

The ship lay off Penzance for nine days: we were open to visitors on certain afternoons, and various entertainments were given ashore and in the ship. Certain adventurous spirits in the wardroom established a close liaison with kindred spirits amongst the colony of artists at Newlyn, not so much from the common standpoint of art, as from the attraction of the Bohemian life of dancing all night, holding bacon-and-egg parties in the middle-watch, and returning on board at five or six o'clock in the morning.

While here I heard that I had been selected for the signal course for which I had applied the

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previous year when I was in the *Lion*. The ship sailed for Devonport on September 6 to give summer leave. I left her on the 22nd, and went on leave before joining the Signal School at Portsmouth.

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CHAPTER VIII

SIGNAL SCHOOL, 1920–21. H.M.S. *SPENSER*, 1921–23

My first faint glimmer of interest in signalling was born in my schooldays some time before I entered the Navy. I had one day paid a visit to the Coastguard Station on Folkestone Pier, and, having made friends with one of the coastguardmen, was allowed to make a laborious copy of the flags of the International Code. During my two years in the *Forward* I was signal-officer of the ship, though without any qualification whatever, and with little knowledge: I was just there to be "jumped on" if anything went wrong in the signal department.

Sixteen lieutenants were appointed for the qualifying course in visual signalling and wireless telegraphy which began at the Signal School at Portsmouth on October 4, 1920: this was the largest officers' course which had ever been through the school. We joined H.M.S. *Victory*, the ship-name of the Royal Naval Barracks, the previous evening and lived there for the next ten months: the Signal School is a part of the Barracks, and but a few minutes' walk across the parade-ground from the officers' mess. Incidentally this was the first time I had served ashore since I first went to sea over eight years previously.

Instruction began at 8.45 with a semaphore and

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Morse-flag signalling exercise on the parade-ground and continued, with a ten minutes "stand-easy," until 11.45. Starting again at one o'clock with a flag-signalling exercise between the three masts on the parade-ground, lectures or practical work went on until 3.45. There remained a flashing exercise to be read after dark—this could be done from the windows of the mess—and the day's instruction was over, though most of us generally put in a couple of hours' extra work on our books before turning in. This routine continued for five days a week: we were free from four o'clock on Friday afternoon until Monday morning either to remain in Barracks, or go away on week-end leave. This respite from our work was most welcome and refreshing.

The first four months were occupied by the visual signalling part of the course. Test examination papers were set at intervals, and the final papers and practical examinations took place at the end of this period. The wireless course occupied the next four months, at the end of which the whole sixteen of us passed out successfully, with three months' added seniority, and half a crown a day extra pay as specialist officers. The occasion was celebrated by a very cheery "Long Course" dinner-party. Four Army officers who happened to be staying in the Mess at the time were put to bed with musical honours: between one and two in the morning we carried them in procession round the building and, led by one of our number playing the bagpipes, dumped them on their beds. Total casualties—one pair of naval trousers rent from top to bottom

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by the spurs of a struggling soldier who did not want to be put to bed.

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On leaving the Signal School I was appointed as Signal-officer of the Second Destroyer Flotilla, Atlantic Fleet, in the *Spenser*, a flotilla-leader of 1,750 tons, armed with five 4·7-inch guns, one 3-inch anti-aircraft gun, and six 21-inch torpedo tubes in two triple mountings.

Each of the Atlantic Fleet destroyer-flotillas consisted of a flotilla-leader and eight destroyers, organized in two divisions of four boats each. A Captain (D.) was in command of the leader and of the flotilla as a whole: each destroyer was commanded by a Lieutenant-Commander, and each division by a Commander. On the staff of Captain (D.) were specialist officers of the gunnery, torpedo, navigation, and signal branches: it was the latter position that I filled. There were about fifteen officers in the *Spenser's* ward-room.

Hitherto the visual signalling of each flotilla had been in charge of a Signal Boatswain, with a Warrant Telegraphist responsible for the wireless communications: the appointment of a Lieutenant (S.) co-ordinated these duties and, by placing both visual and wireless communications under the control of one officer, made for greater efficiency.

I joined the *Spenser* at Portsmouth towards the end of August, and we sailed on September 1 for a cruise in the Baltic, with the four ships of the Second Light-Cruiser Squadron. We picked up the remainder of our flotilla at a rendezvous

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off the mouth of the Thames at mid-day, and met the light-cruisers off Heligoland the following afternoon. That evening we entered the estuary of the Elbe, and passed close by the German naval base of Cuxhaven. Brunsbuttel, at the entrance to the Kiel Canal, was reached after dark. Getting the nine destroyers through the double locks took some time, but was carried out with the usual German machine-like efficiency. By ten o'clock *Spenser* was in the Canal and, with a German pilot on board, commenced the slow passage to Holtenau at the exit into the Baltic.

The Kiel Canal was first opened in 1895, and was internationalized by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Its length from end to end is sixty miles, and its average width over 100 yards, with a depth of water of thirty-six feet. Lighted by big arc lamps every few hundred yards, it was rather like going along a main street of water. It was disappointing to have passed through it in the dark when nothing of the surrounding country could be seen.

We arrived at the Holtenau locks at dawn on the 3rd and, after we were through, anchored for an hour to await the light-cruisers, with the great naval base of Kiel in sight about two miles away. Weighing again at seven o'clock, course was set to the eastward through Kiel Bay and the Fehmarn Belt for Danzig. Next morning the squadron arrived at Neufahrwasser, where I had spent two eventful nights soon after the Armistice when in the *Centaur*. Preceded by the light-cruisers, we steamed through the canal which joins Danzig to Neufahrwasser, one of the mouths of the Vistula,

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and berthed alongside in a basin in Holm Island within a mile or two of the city.

Danzig, the capital of the Danzig Free State under the League of Nations, is an ancient city, once a member of the Hanseatic League: its narrow streets and high mediæval buildings, with richly decorated gable façades, are most picturesque. As diversion from the ancient and picturesque there was the Danzigerhof, a big café music-hall where we used to go for dinner, and from which we seldom returned before the small hours of the morning. One of our men who was reported for having overstayed his leave gave the ingenious excuse that he had lost his way due to having followed one of our officers (returning from the Danzigerhof) round and round the basin at three o'clock in the morning!

From Danzig the squadron proceeded to Memel on September 8. Memel Territory was governed by a French High Commissioner under the League of Nations. It has no harbour worthy of the name, so the light-cruisers and destroyers anchored outside while *Spenser*, flying the Rear-Admiral's flag, crept cautiously up the shallow river and berthed alongside. We remained there for two days. The High Commissioner, a French General Officer, was entertained at luncheon on board, and at a dinner-party in the *Curacoa* the night of our departure. In the middle of this a certain Polish countess, loth to be left behind when we sailed from Danzig, arrived on board, having flown thence in an aeroplane. She had hastily to be sent ashore again.

We left at midnight, and reached Libau, fifty

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miles up the coast in Latvia, next morning. In this large harbour there was ample room for the whole squadron to berth alongside: we lay in the river which runs into the sea from Libau lake, a few miles inland from the town. When sailing on this lake one afternoon we came across an old Latvian peasant among the marshes which border it. Addressing him familiarly as "George," we asked him in English whether there were any duck to be found there. To our astonishment he replied, also in English, that there were no duck in those marshes. One wondered where and how he had learnt to speak our language.

While lying alongside at Libau a crowd of poor and hungry natives waited about on the quay all day and half the night, grateful for any scraps of food our good-natured sailors gave them: some even went so far as to pick out of the water such food refuse as had been thrown down the rubbish chute. Since the Revolution in Russia in 1917 the people of the Eastern Baltic had lived in a terrible state of poverty, lacking the very necessities of life. When our ships were up there in 1919 it was possible to get anything from a grand-piano to a pair of Zeiss field-glasses in exchange for a few tins of cigarettes or so many pounds of soap.

We remained two days at Libau, and left on the 12th for Riga, the capital of Latvia, situated nine miles from the mouth of the Dvina river where it flows out into the Gulf of Riga. It is an imposing city of domes and spires dating back to the thirteenth century, and in the days of Imperial Russia ranked second in importance to St. Peters-

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burg in the Baltic. During the German occupation of Riga in the Great War, the Germans seized all metal statues in the city: their empty stone pedestals were still to be seen, as were also traces of damage to buildings by bombardment.

The usual entertainments were given for us ashore, and in return the Admiral gave a dance in the *Curacoa* the night before we left. At this dance I met a young Latvian girl who had been rescued from the Bolsheviks by one of our warships and who was taken home to England, where she lived for a year and a half. Her gratitude to the English and our Navy in particular was most touching.

After two days at Riga the squadron sailed for Reval through the Irben Strait, a roundabout route necessitated by the fact that certain old minefields in the vicinity were believed not to have been swept clear. As if to give colour to this supposition a floating mine was sighted and exploded by rifle-fire from one of the destroyers. Hardly had this mild excitement ended when "man overboard" was signalled from the flagship. All ships stopped, lifebuoys were dropped, and boats lowered, but without avail, as the man was not seen again: in the rough sea that was running there was little chance of his being picked up, though we remained in the neighbourhood for half an hour.

Owing to these delays the squadron was late in reaching Reval, and did not arrive until the afternoon of the 17th. Arrangements had previously been made for the Admiral and a number of officers to attend an official luncheon ashore,

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and, late as it was, we found that we were still expected. Accordingly, I found myself going ashore in a tug, through a wet rough sea, for luncheon at about five o'clock in the evening. We were spared a heavy meal, however, and our kind hosts entertained us with coffee and liqueurs instead.

There was no doubt of the warmth of our welcome. Our ships had helped the Esthonians in their struggle for independence against the Bolsheviks in 1919–20, and their gratitude was unbounded. On the day after our arrival the following English translation of an article appeared in the local newspaper:

"To the Brave Sailors of the British Fleet.
"Welcome to Esthonia.

"During the heaviest hours of the struggle of our independence the Unconquered British Fleet came unselfishly to our assistance, thus encouraging us and giving us the assistance we needed to continue the fight, that we were in, to the finish.

"Recollection of the help given to our people in the proper time by the Sons of the Old Britannia will never disappear from the memory of the Esthonian population.

"We are always awaiting you—as visitors whom we will receive hearts full of thanks and with open hands.

"Welcome—Sailors of the Famous Fleet."

Reval is another mediæval city of the Hanseatic League. Dominated by the ancient Domberg (Castle Hill), it rises steeply from the sea, the narrow streets winding up among the thirteenth-

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century houses of the Baltic merchants. Its tall church spires are a noticeable feature, and that of St. Olai Kirche, which soars up to a height of 450 feet, is said to be the highest in Russia.

Early on the morning of the 20th we left for Helsingfors, the capital of Finland, and arrived there at noon. Helsingfors is a modern city situated on the much-indented peninsula of Estnäs, and guarded by the adjacent island fortress of Sveaborg. We spent two nights there. I say "two nights" because the daytime amusements of sight-seeing and shopping are hardly worthy of mention compared to the dinner-parties and dances, especially when it is on record that "I was up till three a.m. the last two nights, and fell in love with a Russian girl." Which is quite as it should be, though I did not go so far as to bring her across from Reval in one of our destroyers as did somebody whom I know. Helsingfors was reputed to be "dry," but we did not notice it.

Our next visit was to Stockholm, at the end of a delightful passage of fifty miles up the narrow winding Stockholm fiord, the trees on either side decked in their autumnal blaze of colour of yellows and browns and flaming reds. After spending a night at Vartan, a few miles below the city, to take in oil, we anchored in the harbour on the morning of the 24th.

The next three days were spent in the usual whirl of social activities, and I renewed aquaintance with friends I had made on my previous visit. Lunching at the British Legation one day I met a young and charming Polish baroness to whom I transferred the undying affection which I

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had bestowed upon the Russian lady at Helsingfors. Not for nothing is a sailor said to have a wife in every port.

The Grand Hotel in Stockholm is remarkable for its magnificent dining-room, built round three sides of a glass-roofed courtyard on to which one looks through Moorish arches outlined in electric lights. In the middle of the courtyard plays a fountain surrounded by palms, hot-house plants, and flowers, and bordered by newly-sown grass of a brilliant green.

The night before we left a dance was held on board. *Curacoa*, *Caledon*, and *Spenser* were secured alongside one another, and we danced on the quarter-decks of the two light-cruisers, while our little ship filled the humble rôle of cloak-room and refreshment-room. The dance was the greatest success, and was attended by most of the diplomatic corps, as well as naval and military officers and their ladies. My impression of the year before regarding the beauty of the ladies of Stockholm was more than confirmed.

On passage to Copenhagen the destroyers carried out exercises with the light-cruisers. It is necessary to mention this lest it should be thought that all one does in the Navy is to attend dinner-parties and dances. Two days at sea with a little imitation "war" thrown in clear away the cobwebs, besides bracing one up for the next round of gaiety.

After another four days of it at Copenhagen—the Polish baroness happened to be there too—the squadron sailed for Gothenburg, where we arrived on October 4. Next in size to Stockholm,

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Gothenburg is one of the chief seaports of Sweden: it has several prosperous shipbuilding yards, in one of which we were interested to see a huge Diesel engine for the propulsion of a new motor-ship.

Each of our three nights at Gothenburg had its dinner-party and dance. Though our ignorance of Swedish made little difference to our enjoyment on these occasions, a kindly Swedish maiden offered to teach me at least one sentence in her language which would help things along when conversation flagged. Not without suspicion I allowed her to write it down for me, and, after practising it for a while, at her suggestion I tried it upon the prettiest girl I could see in the room. The effect was marvellous. She declined, however, to tell me its meaning, and bade me try it upon a more elderly lady. Before doing so I took the precaution of finding out its meaning from a Swedish naval officer who could speak English. "Darling, I love you," he told me.

Perhaps under the circumstances it was as well that we left Gothenburg when we did.

We arrived at Oslo on the 8th for a final five days' dissipation before returning to England, during which time my affections were in the keeping of a Norwegian dancer. H.M. the King of Norway paid an official visit to the *Curacoa*, ships being manned and a Royal salute fired. With a last dance in the *Caledon* and a farewell luncheon party in the *Spenser*, our Baltic cruise came to an end. We sailed on the 13th for England, crossed the North Sea in a heavy

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south-westerly gale, and two days later reached Port Edgar, the base of the Atlantic Fleet destroyer-flotillas in the Firth of Forth.

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Situated on the south side above the Forth Bridge, Port Edgar is not far from the village of South Queensferry, and nearly opposite Rosyth dockyard. The base comprises a small store-depôt, dockyard, hospital, and barracks, together with the destroyers' berths known as the Pens. These consist of wooden piers jutting out at right angles to the shore, and alongside them, like sheep in a pen, lie the destroyers, bow to stern, and two or three abreast As many as forty destroyers can berth in the Pens at a time. Many weeks of the next year were we destined to spend in the Pens.

After a fortnight at Port Edgar we went north to join the Fleet at Invergordon for the autumn exercises. These occupied the first ten days of November, in intermittently stormy weather which caused endless delays and post-ponements of the practices. This was my first experience of signal work with a large Fleet in company. Messages were coming through at all hours of the day and night, and I was kept very busy dealing with them. With the Fleet at sea I was constantly on the bridge, and slept in my clothes at night when it was possible to go below.

In these Fleet exercises the chief rôle of the destroyers is that of making torpedo attacks on the " enemy's " battlefleet. Stationed somewhere ahead of our own battlefleet would be the light-

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cruiser *Coventry*, the destroyer flagship, and strung out behind her, like chicks following the mother-hen, would be perhaps four flotillas, each of eight destroyers in line-ahead, led by their respective flotilla-leaders. Away in the distance on the edge of the horizon could be seen the "enemy" battlefleet. On reaching the correct strategical position the signal to attack would be made by the *Coventry*, and each flotilla, in successive waves, would turn at full speed towards the "enemy" to deliver its torpedo attack. When within range torpedoes would be fired and the flotilla turn away, each destroyer heeling over like a yacht under sail, and belching from her funnels clouds of oil-fuel smoke like black cotton-wool to lay down a smoke-screen to cover the retirement. One might dive back through one's own smoke-screen to see the knife-like edges of the bows of the succeeding wave of attacking destroyers coming straight towards one, so considerable skill in manœuvring and speed in signalling was necessary. At night, too, with no lights showing, things were apt to become really exciting.

And then, the "battle" over, with the signal "Pick up torpedoes," came the anti-climax. If less than the number fired were picked up the missing torpedoes—familiarly known as "mouldies"—had to be searched for. In line-abreast, and half a mile or so apart, the flotilla would sweep up and down the area where the missing torpedoes were likely to be. As each one was worth several thousand pounds, the search for an elusive "mouldy" was not lightly abandoned,

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as we knew to our cost, and after some hours' sweeping we were thankful when darkness put an end to this tedious occupation.

On one such occasion, after a long and tiring day, I was standing on the quarter-deck idly reading a semaphore message that was being passed up the line from one of our indomitable divisional-commanders.

"Captain (D.) from '*V*. . . .'," it read; and then ended abruptly, "Hymn 254, first line?"

On looking up this reference we found, "Art thou weary, art thou languid?"

On completion of the exercises we were detached from the Fleet, and after a few days at Port Edgar, arrived at Portsmouth on November 17 to give Christmas leave.

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In the same way as many English people migrate to the Riviera for the winter, so has the Spring Cruise of the Atlantic Fleet to Spain, Gibraltar, and the western basin of the Mediterranean become an annual event.

Spenser left Portsmouth on January 14, 1922, for Torbay, where the Fleet was assembling preparatory to the Spring Cruise. Three days later we sailed in company for Arosa Bay in the north-west of Spain, and there followed a strategical exercise while crossing the Bay of Biscay. No little strategy is required and a considerable amount of exercise is obtained in maintaining one's foothold on a destroyer's bridge reeling about in the heavy swell and rough seas for which the Bay is famed. By the third day we had lost all interest in the operations, and

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our arms and legs ached from clinging to the bridge rails and keeping a precarious balance on the slippery wet iron decks. The ship was wet and our clothes were wet: our predominating thought was, "I wish the damned thing would keep still for five minutes." I have sometimes noticed that the instinct to preserve one's balance which becomes automatic through its exercise at sea still persists after one has got ashore: when going up the stairs of a house I have found myself instinctively waiting for the familiar pitch or roll of a ship.

Our ten days' stay in Arosa Bay was marked by unceasing rain, gales, and thunderstorms, and we were not sorry to leave at the end of the month for Gibraltar. The inevitable strategical exercise took place on passage, and on the morning of February 2, a day of bright sun and sparkling seas, we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar and arrived at the Rock.

Except for a brief stay of a few hours when the *Forward* passed through over six years earlier, this was my first visit to Gibraltar. Even then it was but a short one, for after four days the Atlantic Fleet sailed again to meet the Mediterranean Fleet in yet another strategical exercise on a grand scale. This "battle" over, both Fleets anchored on the 9th in Pollensa Bay, a large anchorage in the north-east corner of Majorca.

During the fortnight that we spent there we enjoyed the opportunities of meeting old friends in the Mediterranean Fleet. "At Homes" were given in the Fleet flagships *Queen Elizabeth* and *Iron Duke*, and inter-Fleet sailing regattas, boxing,

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and other competitions were held in a spirit of friendly rivalry. Comparing our own ships of the Atlantic Fleet, painted the sombre dark grey which accords with the grey gloom of the Home station on which they served, with the lighter grey and snowy awnings of the Mediterranean ships, not a few of us must have envied them their lot amid blue seas and warm sunshine.

At the head of Pollensa Bay on the south side is the old town of Alcudia with its ancient ruins, and a few miles inland, among orange and olive groves, lies the more modern town of Pollensa. Perched at the summit of a steep hill overlooking Pollensa stands an old monastery from which was a magnificent view of the mountains of Majorca and, across the reclaimed Albufera marsh, the ordered lines of the ships at anchor in Pollensa Bay.

On the 23rd the Fleets dispersed, the Mediterranean Fleet returning to Malta, and squadrons and flotillas of the Atlantic Fleet to pay separate visits to places in the western Mediterranean basin. With the battleships *Revenge* and *Royal Sovereign* the Second Destroyer flotilla arrived next morning at Algiers.

Originally founded in the tenth century, Algiers was famous in the days of the Barbary States as the Pirate City. Under the Deys of Algiers, Turkish and Moorish buccaneers led a roving plundering life round the Mediterranean coasts, and subsisted prosperously by their piracy. The city was captured from the Turks by the French in 1830, and under their administration

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has become an attractive resort to which numbers of sun-seeking English people flock each winter.

From the busy harbour the flat-roofed white houses of the old Moorish town climb steeply up the hillside, seemingly piled one upon another like a child's bricks. This is the Kasbah, the native quarter, where, in precipitous narrow streets of steps, painted Jezebels look down out of upper windows with shameless smiles. Even in the middle of the day the sun barely penetrates these shut-in alleys, and it is not advisable to venture into their gloom after dark without a guide. At the top of the hill one emerges from this squalor to see the ruins of the old fortified walls and the barracks which, in olden days, was the citadel and palace of the Deys of Algiers. From here, in pleasant contrast to the enclosed murk of the Kasbah, the wide blue waters of the Bay of Algiers lie sparkling in the sun, with a fringe of golden sands curving round to Cape Matifou in the east.

Not far from the square of palms and gardens known as the Place du Gouvernement is the 900-year-old mosque of Jama'a el Kebir, or Grand Mosque, the oldest in Algeria. From the glare and heat of the dusty street one steps into the dim cool shade of the courtyard of the mosque, where one's ears are greeted by the refreshing tinkle of falling water from an old stone fountain at which the faithful are performing their ablutions before prayer. While they tread barefoot, unbelievers such as we must don large loose heelless slippers before setting foot on the sacred carpet.

The more modern part of the town comprises

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the Place du Gouvernement and Bab Azoun, the main street of shops. Leaving this behind, the road mounts upward among villas and gardens with palms, pepper- and plane-trees to the residential quarter of Mustapha Superieur. From the golf-links at the top one looks south across a dusty plain to the distant range of the Little Atlas mountains.

A favourite rendezvous of our officers ashore was the Hotel St. George at Mustapha Superieur, a most delightful hotel built in the Moorish style. Bougainvillea makes brilliant splashes of colour on its walls, and a garden of shady palms and sub-tropical flowering shrubs adjoins it. Here, thanks to the kindness of the English residents, we might spend strenuous afternoons playing tennis, or lazy hours in the cool of the garden. We often ended the day by dining there and dancing afterwards.

During a dance there one night my partner and I were strolling up and down the garden terrace between dances, and happened to notice one of our officers sitting out with a girl with whom he had been dancing most of that evening, and from whom he had been inseparable for some days. Rather than spoil a promising romance, I suggested to my partner that we make ourselves scarce. Before we had time to do so, however, this officer got up, seized me by the arm, and in a forceful whisper said, " Can't you see I'm serious, you fool ? " So serious was he, indeed, that they were engaged before the flotilla sailed, and were married a few months later.

The more official entertaining by the French

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naval and military took the form of the "Vin d'honneur," which meant going ashore in tight-fitting frock-coats to spend a hot evening drinking Vermouth, and trying to speak French. By way of returning this hospitality *Revenge* gave a ball on board, which ended in the small hours of the morning with bacon-and-egg parties, at which our chosen partners were present, in the destroyers' wardrooms.

Outside Algiers were a number of organized motor excursions. The most extensive of these occupied two days, and enabled one to sleep the night in a tent in the desert at the oasis of Bou Saada. Though unable to do this particular trip, four of us motored through Blida, thirty-two miles from Algiers, across a hot bare plain, to the Gorge de la Chiffa. Here the road, cut out of the solid rock, winds for seven miles through a narrow gorge with precipitous mountains on either side, and a stream brawling along below. At one point monkeys could be seen clambering about on the rocks, and some of them came down in a friendly way to be fed by tourists. We made the return journey by the coast road through Colea, Staneole, and St. Eugene.

When we left Algiers at the end of our ten days' visit there were a number of shattered romances, and bent—if not temporarily broken—hearts. Appropriately enough our expert at Biblical quotations again came to the fore. As the flotilla cleared the harbour and formed into line-ahead, up the line came his signal: "Song of Solomon, chapter 2, verse 5."

He had not evidently had the luck of my other

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friend on the terrace of St. George's Hotel, for the interpretation of his signal read: "Stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love."

On passage between Algiers and Almeria, on the south-east coast of Spain, the destroyers carried out depth-charge dropping exercises. An anti-submarine device invented during the war, the depth-charge is little more than an under-water bomb which, by means of a hydrostatic valve, can be set to explode at any required depth. If it explodes close to a submerged enemy submarine the chances are that, if not entirely destroyed, she will be badly damaged and forced to come to the surface. On completion of the practice the destroyers stopped and lowered boats to pick up the fish killed by the explosion. So the depth-charge has its use in peace as well as in war.

With the *Revenge* and *Royal Sovereign* we arrived at Almeria on the evening of March 7, the flotilla berthing alongside in the harbour, while the two battleships anchored outside.

In days gone by Almeria had been a naval harbour of some importance: the old Moorish walls and fortifications still remain, though mostly in ruins.

In honour of the visit of the squadron a bull-fight had been arranged on a Sunday afternoon. The authorities were careful to advertise the fact that no horses were to be used, evidently knowing the British antipathy to this form of sport. As many of us had not seen a bull-fight before we attended this one more in a spirit of curiosity than anything else.

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The Plaza de Toro, or bull-ring, is a circular sanded arena some 70–100 yards across, surrounded in the lower part by rows of seats, with tiers of boxes above: over the fronts of the boxes are often draped the gaily-embroidered Spanish shawls of their lady occupants.

Proceedings open with the entry of the *matadores* and *banderilleros* in their familiar short coloured jackets and knee-breeches. To the accompaniment of the band they make a tour of the arena in procession. There are probably two *matadores*, each with half a dozen *banderilleros* who act as his assistants. When horses are used there are also mounted *picadores* with lances.

At the blast of a trumpet a gate on one side of the arena opens, and the first bull enters. He stands at first as if dazed, lashing his tail, and tossing his black head in the air. A *banderillero* approaches, flaunting a red cloak before the animal's eyes to induce it to charge: as, with head down, it does so, he blinds it with his cloak, and steps lightly aside from those sharp tossing horns. The bull is thus goaded by the *banderilleros* who, to still further infuriate it, stick barbs into its shoulders as it charges past them. After perhaps a quarter of an hour of this the *matador*, with his red *muleta* (cloak) over his left arm and a short sharp sword in his right hand, makes ready to administer the *coup de grâce*. Seizing the opportunity when he is almost between the animal's horns, with one stroke he plunges the sword deep into the vital spot in front of the withers, piercing the heart of the bull, which drops dead at his feet.

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In the course of an afternoon probably half a dozen bulls are killed, the *matadores* with their assistant *banderilleros* taking part alternately. My sympathies being entirely with the bull, it afforded me vast pleasure and amusement to see a fat Spanish policeman chased by one bull behind a wooden barricade on the edge of the arena, and finally be obliged to climb to the top of it while the bull stood on guard below.

As a sport bull-fighting does not appeal to me, and I left early, rather nauseated with the whole performance. Having seen one bull-fight, I have no desire to see another.

After six days at Almeria we sailed for Gibraltar, where we joined the rest of the Atlantic Fleet on the 14th, to spend a fortnight before returning to England. Our stay was marred by a sad accident to submarine *H.* 42, which was rammed during exercises with destroyers in the Straits of Gibraltar, and sunk with all hands. When we sailed on the 28th *Spenser* dropped a wreath over the spot where the submarine had gone down, in memory of the gallant officers and men of her crew.

On passage to Ferrol we carried out exercises with the other squadrons, and the flotilla arrived there on the morning of the 31st for a week's visit. The small English colony at Ferrol, mostly employees of British shipbuilding firms in the Spanish dockyard, made us very welcome. By way of returning their hospitality ashore we gave a children's party in the *Spenser*, which the small people much enjoyed.

Leaving Ferrol on April 8, we met the

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remainder of the Atlantic Fleet, returning to home waters from the Spring Cruise, at a rendezvous off Ushant, and took part in a final "battle" with torpedo-dropping seaplanes before dispersing to home ports for Easter leave. *Spenser* reached Plymouth on the 10th, not to give leave, however, but to await further orders.

. . . . .

At this time the situation in Ireland was becoming critical, for the Sein Feiners had inaugurated a reign of murder and pillage which was not to be tolerated by the British Government. Before we arrived home from the Mediterranean we had heard that our Easter leave was to be deferred, so we were not surprised when, within twenty-four hours, the Second Destroyer flotilla was ordered to Irish waters. While our destroyers were stationed at Belfast, Kingstown, Queenstown, and Berehaven, *Spenser* was sent temporarily to Milford Haven. We lay alongside in the dockyard there for a week while cypher telegrams about the situation came pouring in. As signal officer it was my duty to decode these, and I know of nothing more exasperating than to be turned out in the middle of the night and confronted with a cypher message of a hundred or more groups which, when decyphered, proved to have nothing whatever to do with the situation.

On the 19th we received orders to proceed to Queenstown, and arrived there the same night. A curt notation in the ship's log, "2130. Sentries posted," gives an indication of the precautions it was thought necessary to adopt in case of trouble

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ashore. This state of affairs was also responsible for my having to take my turn at prowling round the upper deck with a loaded revolver at the unwholesome hour of four o'clock in the morning, in charge of the armed guard which was kept in instant readiness all night. The possibility of Sein Feiners making an attempt to board the ship was not entirely absent from our minds.

A fortnight passed in this way. We were in touch with a detachment of British troops ashore, and received wireless reports from our destroyers on developments at places round the coast where they were stationed. The captain of one boat in the south-west of Ireland had an exciting encounter with armed Sein Feiners in a house ashore one night, in which he had decidedly the best of it.

By the beginning of May the situation had become easier. Once again the Navy had exerted its silent pressure in favour of peace. The flotilla was ordered to home ports to give the delayed leave, *Spenser* arriving at Portsmouth on the 6th. We remained there refitting until the middle of June.

While on leave M—— and I arranged to be presented at a levée. On the day of the ceremony I met him at his Club where, resplendent in full-dress with the substitution of a green cardboard lampshade for his cocked hat, he was leaning against the bar, fortifying himself with—milk. When, at eleven o'clock, we reached St. James's Palace, where the levée was to be held, we found the usual crowd of sightseers outside. I, for one, was glad to escape the embarrassing attentions of

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a small boy who had followed me down Pall Mall, exclaiming in shrill cockney accents, " 'Ere's the Prince of Wyles. Mike wye fer the Prince of Wyles."

Inside the Palace the crowd was even greater. A wide carpeted staircase led up to the State Apartments where, in an anteroom to the Throne Room, were assembled some hundreds of officers and gentlemen who were to be presented at the levée. The blue and gold of naval uniforms and the gold and scarlet and green of military uniforms mingled with the more sombre hues of khaki—full-dress was not then *de rigueur*—the pale blue of the new R.A.F. uniforms, the black of Court-dress, and the wigs and robes of learned members of Bench and Bar. Officers of the fighting services rubbed shoulders with representatives of the Diplomatic and Civil Services, of the Church and laity.

It was a hot, sunny June morning. Bluebottles banged and buzzed against the window-panes, and now and then, in a lull in the subdued murmur of conversation, could be heard the strains of music of the band of one of the Guards Regiments playing in the garden below, where occasional glimpses of a cool green lawn and flowers could be seen under the lowered sun-blinds. Large oil-paintings of former Royalties hung on the walls of the room round which, at intervals, were stationed officers of H.M. Bodyguard of the Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms, helmeted, and standing with upraised swords, as motionless as the pictures above their heads.

In that crowd we made but slow progress

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towards the door of the Throne Room and, with the increasing heat, our already close-fitting uniforms seemed to become tighter and tighter. Once in the Royal presence, however, this was forgotten in interest in the brilliant scene around us. On a dais at one side of the room stood His Majesty the King in the uniform of a Field-Marshal, attended by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, and other members of the Royal Family. Also in attendance upon His Majesty were his Gentlemen-in-Waiting, Crown Equerries, and Aides-de-Camp, together with officers of the Royal Household, the Lord Chamberlain, Master of the Horse, Gold Stick in Waiting, Marshal of the Diplomatic Corps, Comptroller of the Household, Treasurer to the King, and Keeper of the Privy Purse. Other high officers of State included Cabinet Ministers; the Prime Minister, First Lord of the Admiralty, the Secretaries of State for War and Air, of the Home Department, and of Foreign Affairs. Here was a gathering of the highest in the land; the King-Emperor himself, the Heir to the Throne, and Ministers of the Imperial Government—men in whose hands lay the fate and fortunes of the British Empire.

Conspicuous among the uniforms, the medals and ribbons of orders and decorations of distinguished Admirals and Generals, were the gorgeous silken robes and jewelled turbans of Indian rajahs and native princes and potentates of British Dominions beyond the seas.

A *débutante* attending her first Court can hardly have been more concerned about her appearance than was I as the time drew near for

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my presentation. After having been wedged for half an hour, perspiring in the heat, my collar felt like pulp, my tie might have been round the back of my neck, and my sword-belt was much too tight. Apprehensive thoughts flashed through my mind. Supposing my sword gets between my legs and trips me up just as I am making my bow before the King! How awful if he stops me and says that my medal-ribbons are half an inch too high, or that I have a smut on my nose! Before, however, I had time to indulge in any further presentiments, a Court official had taken my presentation card, and had handed it to the Lord Chamberlain. With a hoarse whisper from my friend M——, "Bow, you fool, don't curtsey," the Lord Chamberlain announced my name, and I stepped forward, bowed before the King, and passed on.

The ordeal over, M—— and I made our way back to the Club, where, metaphorically speaking, we loosened our girths and indulged in something a little stronger than milk.

When *Spenser* left Portsmouth on June 14 it was with a new Captain (D.) in command of the flotilla. This particularly concerned me as it was to him that I was personally responsible for the signal and wireless communications of our destroyers, and I was always with him on the bridge at sea. We reached Port Edgar two days later, and were based there until the end of the month carrying out gunnery and torpedo exercises in the Firth of Forth. The flotilla was at sea most of the week, returning to the Pens for the week-ends.

Early in July the Atlantic Fleet assembled in

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Torbay for a visit of inspection by H.M. the King. We arrived there on the 3rd, and on the following afternoon, in company with the remainder of the Fleet, put to sea to meet the King in the Royal Yacht *Victoria and Albert*. As the Yacht passed all vessels manned and cheered ship. We returned to our anchorage the same evening. During the next three days of the King's visit to his Fleet he inspected parties of officers and men from different ships on board the *Queen Elizabeth*, and witnessed exercises at sea, including a firing at the ex-German cruiser *Nurnburg*. As soon as this was over the King returned to Portsmouth in the *Queen Elizabeth*, which steamed through the Fleet, ships again being manned and cheered as he passed.

We spent a further week in Torbay after the King had left, during which the flotilla boat-pulling regatta was held. I went over to Dartmouth one day and re-visited the Naval College where I had been eleven years before. Since Osborne College had been given up after the war Dartmouth had been considerably enlarged, and there were many changes from the old days. I found the petty-officer of my term in charge of the canteen instead of chasing erring cadets about. One of the few things which had remained unchanged was the smell that greeted one in passing the kennels of the *Britannia* beagles. There still remained, too, many of the masters who had endeavoured to instil their knowledge into our wooden heads.

Spenser sailed for Portsmouth on the 16th, and after five weeks there giving summer leave, arrived again on August 25 at Port Edgar. During the

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next three weeks we were fully occupied with gunnery and torpedo exercises, in addition to which I was carrying out tests of an experimental radio-telephony set which had been installed in the *Spenser* and another of our destroyers.

Officially known by its designer as "8H," this installation proved as prolific a source of amusement to my messmates as it did of trouble to me. After a hectic couple of hours wrestling with such things as modulating circuits, grid leaks, and a high-tension alternating current of 1,200–1,600 volts, I would come down to the wardroom, my hair on end, and cursing the man who invented "8H," to be greeted by shouts of, "How's Eight Harry? Has he bitten you yet?" This was a reference to the fact that one of my telegraphists had received a severe electric shock from 8H a few days previously. "Eight Harry" came to be looked upon as the signal officer's naughty child, and became quite a ship's pet.

We had comfortably settled down at Port Edgar to our routine of practices in anticipation of the autumn Fleet exercises in the Moray Firth when orders were suddenly received for the flotilla to proceed to Constantinople. Since the Armistice Constantinople had been under the control of British military forces, with certain units of the Mediterranean Fleet stationed in Turkish waters in support. At this time the New Turkey under Mustapha Kemal was emerging from its chrysalis, and the pangs of its birth were accompanied by certain anti-Ally activities which called for reinforcements to maintain order. That our flotilla should have been ordered out there,

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away from the cold and mists of the North Sea and the daily grind of gunnery and torpedo exercises to the sunny warmth and blue skies of the Eastern Mediterranean, was most welcome to us all, though possibly the married officers were not quite so enthusiastic about it.

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Little time was wasted. The flotilla left for Plymouth on September 13, spent just over twenty-four hours there completing with fuel, stores, and provisions, and sailed on the 16th for Gibraltar. For once in a way we had a smooth passage across the Bay, and arrived at the Rock four days later to refuel, leaving again the same evening for Malta. Hitherto we had, according to instructions, been proceeding at our leisurely economical speed of 12 knots, but soon after leaving Gibraltar came a wireless message ordering us to increase speed to 20 knots. Evidently we were urgently required. By the 23rd we were at Malta: a few hours there to take in provisions and fuel, and we were off again, slipping along at twenty knots through a glassy sea under a hot sun and blue sky. It seemed impossible to realize that a week earlier we had been among the clouded grey skies and sullen seas of the English Channel.

Next evening we rounded Cape Matapan and Cape Malea, the southernmost points of Greece, and entered the Ægean, with the sunset glow fading into darkness behind the rugged mountains of the Peloponnese. Northwards past the rocky islet of Belo Pulo, on through the narrow Zea and Doro Channels, the lights flashing red and white from their lighthouses—how familiar it all was!

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Could it really be six whole years since those days of the War when, for two and a-half years, I was escorting and patrolling up and down this route, hunting enemy submarines in these very waters? Leaning over the bridge screens, the soft night air blowing cool on one's face, there was a great sense of peace in the star-reflections in the mirror-like surface of the sea, and in the whisper of the water rippling aft along the ship's side in frothy phosphorescence. Even the hum of our turbines and the roar of the forced-draught fans gave a feeling of power and security in keeping with the peace of that night. Six years ago the guns on the forecastle below, now silent and shrouded, would have been uncovered and loaded, their crews standing by for action. In those days of war every darkened ship was an object of suspicion, as was every twinkle of light ashore or afloat. Hostile submarines lurked beneath those placid waters, and fathoms deep, her ribs rusting in a watery grave, lay the great leviathan *Britannic* which, though then a hospital-ship, had been torpedoed and sunk by a ruthless enemy.

A wandering off-shore breeze brought a smell of the land, recalling other memories of war in those waters. Looking back, one realized how little change there had been: circumstances were different, but the setting was the same, as changeless in the intervening years since the War as in the two thousand years since the field of Marathon, away on the port beam, had made its name in history. Now, as then,

> "The mountains look on Marathon,
> And Marathon looks on the sea. . . ."

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Eight o'clock on the morning of the 25th found the flotilla off the Dardanelles. On the Asiatic side of the entrance is Kum Kale, and opposite, two miles across the Straits at the tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula, are Seddul Bahr and Cape Helles. As the ship passed close along the European shore within sight of the ruins of the forts at Cape Helles, and of the famous landing-beaches, one marvelled at the brave daring of those gallant men who had landed there amid a hail of Turkish shrapnel, rifle, and machine-gun bullets. Inch by inch and foot by foot they had fought their way up the gullies of those low brown cliffs, always under a withering, devastating fire. In the background the heights of Krithia looked down upon that field of battle where, amid the barren rocks and low scrub, in blazing heat and dust and flies, in chilly fog and rain and mud, those valiant great-hearted souls had lived and fought and died.

Just below Chanak we were greeted by a destroyer of the Mediterranean Fleet who, while still several miles away, started flashing to us.

"Abandon hope, all ye that enter here," she signalled. Such was the manner of our welcome as we neared the end of our two-thousand-mile voyage out from home.

We stopped off Chanak for an hour to communicate with the Senior Naval Officer of the British forces stationed there, and then proceeded through the Narrows. Here, between Chanak on the Asiatic shore and Kilid Bahr on the Gallipoli Peninsula, the Straits are less than a mile wide, with a sharp-angled kink in their fifty-mile

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length through which a strong tide races. Beyond the old town of Gallipoli the Dardanelles ends, and one enters the Sea of Marmora. We reached Constantinople in the evening to see the domes and minarets of Stamboul touched to gold by the rays of the setting sun.

The British military force of occupation was at that time commanded by General Sir Charles Harington, in whom were also vested the powers of British High Commissioner. The naval forces were under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir Reginald Tyrwhitt, whose flag was flown in the light-cruiser *Cardiff*. A few American destroyers were also stationed at Constantinople in connection with the work of the American Relief Commission.

The next morning the Rear-Admiral embarked in the *Spenser*, and with him we went up the Bosphorus and back in order to get to know the lie of the land. From the Sea of Marmora to the Black Sea the Bosphorus winds for about sixteen miles between steep wooded banks, seldom more than two miles apart. At its narrowest it is but three-quarters of a mile wide, and here, a few miles above Constantinople, the centuries-old castles of Rumili Hissar on the European side and Anatoli Hissar on the Asiatic side face one another across the water. The five round towers and embattled walls of Rumili Hissar tell a story of bygone days of strife between Islam and Greece.

Along the shores of the Bosphorus, in tree-shaded gardens where the ubiquitous cypresses stand like sentinels, are the white country-houses of well-to-do Turks, and here and there a mosque and minarets. In sheltered bays each little village

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on the water's edge has its own rickety wooden pier where the native caiques load and discharge their cargoes of goat-skins, wool, mohair, or grain. Many of the houses have picturesque carved wooden balconies which overhang the water, and the fishermen's boats are moored beneath. At the larger waterside resorts of Yenikeui, Therapia, and Buyukdere on the European side there used to be situated, in pre-war days, the summer Embassies of the foreign Powers accredited to the Sublime Porte, their gardens a riot of colour with giant magnolias, lilac, oleander, and flaming Judas trees. Therapia still boasts quite a gay and fashionable summer season, though the days of the Embassies are now past. A service of steamers plys up and down the Bosphorus to these places. Known as *chirkets*, a part of the upper deck is curtained off for the Turkish women. An English lady who sometimes sat among them told me that they would finger her dress and stroke her cheek with their henna-dyed finger-tips, chattering away like children in their delight at this new experience in their secluded lives. Even their babies, which often accompanied them, had tiny henna-stained finger-nails.

Two days after our arrival the flotilla was ordered up to Buyukdere, not far from the Black Sea end of the Bosphorus where it widens into a sheltered bay. During the next three weeks Captain (D.) in the *Spenser* was S.N.O. of the naval forces stationed there: besides the flotilla this included a submarine with her attendant destroyer, employed on special service, and the small seaplane-carrier *Pegasus*. Regular patrols were

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carried out by the destroyers along the adjacent coasts of the Black Sea, and the seaplanes made reconnaissance flights at dawn and dusk each day. These operations had for their object the suppression of any activities such as supplying arms to the Kemalists which might be prejudicial to the Allied control of Constantinople.

My own work at this time was particularly interesting as, owing to Osmanieh wireless station not being in working order, communication between the British High Commissioner at Constantinople and the Foreign Office in London was carried on through H.M. ships. The local use of wireless was therefore restricted, and communication between the flotilla at Buyukdere and the S.N.O. at Constantinople was of a decidedly "Heath Robinson" type. At the top of a hill overlooking the entrance to the Black Sea we had an armed daylight lookout post which signalled to *Spenser* by heliograph or flashing-lamp. Thence messages were passed by semaphore to a grocer's shop on the waterfront in Buyukdere village, the final stage being by telephone through the military exchange in Galata Tower, Pera, to the S.N.O.'s ship afloat.

Buyukdere village is as picturesque as it is dirty. In refreshing contrast to its heat and smells and flies a pleasant tree-shaded valley with a tinkling stream runs inland for a few miles. At its head it is spanned by an ancient Byzantine aqueduct, which is in a good state of preservation, and still carries water to Constantinople. From a nearby eminence one looks northward across the Forest of Belgrade to the waters of the Black Sea.

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On October 11 a conference held at Mudania between the Allies and Mustapha Kemal ended in an agreement that the established neutral zones should be respected, and that Thrace should be evacuated by the Greek army within fifteen days. In course of time the Turkish Government at Angora resumed possession of Eastern Thrace, and gradually took over the administration of Constantinople from the Allies. In consequence of the satisfactory conclusion of these negotiations our destroyer patrols in the Black Sea were withdrawn, and on the 17th the flotilla was moved down to Constantinople, and anchored off Dolma Bagtche, an enormous white palace of former Sultans.

Not far away, on the water's edge at Ortakeui, is a lovely little mosque. On a quiet evening, from its minarets the plaintive long-drawn cry of the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer would come stealing across the water—" Allah-il-ulallah akhbar ulallah-il-allah." (There is one God, the true God, and Allah is His prophet.) Perhaps, too, almost as if associated with that cry from the minaret, might come skimming down the Bosphorus a flight of birds, " The lost souls of the Bosphorus," so called after those drowned in its swift-running current.

Constantinople is divided into three parts. On the European side the waters of the Golden Horn separate the old Turkish quarter of Stamboul from the modern European quarter of Pera: on the Asiatic side, opposite the entrance to the Golden Horn, Scutari faces Pera and Stamboul where the Bosphorus flows out into the Sea of

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Marmora. In Scutari (ancient Chalcedon) many of the houses are built of wood, and in vivid contrast is the huge German-built railway-station of Haidar Pasha, the terminus of the Constantinople—Baghdad railway.

Pera is situated on a high ridge along which runs the Grande Rue with its modern shops and hotels. The trams in this street always seemed to be full to overflowing, and the congestion of traffic would have taxed the powers of even a London policeman. In the midst of a seething mob of clanging trams, hooting motor-cars, cursing drivers of carriages and carts, and pushing, chattering pedestrians the Turkish policeman waved his *bâton* and blew his whistle in vain. No one seemed to take the slightest notice of him, though the British military police succeeded eventually in producing some sort of order out of the chaos.

At the time of the Allied occupation there were many Russian refugees in Constantinople. Most of them had lost all their money, and had been obliged to sell the few valuables that they had been able to save: lovely jewels, priceless furs, and even clothing found their way into the Pera shops. They earned a living as best they could. Some set up shops on their own; Tokatlian's Restaurant was staffed by Russian aristocrat waitresses; at Maxim's, where one danced, a number of Russian officers gave exhibitions of wild Cossack dances; and in the hall of the Pera Club one often saw a dignified and handsome old colonel of the Imperial Russian Guards selling water-colour paintings.

At the back of Pera, where the houses end, the

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country stretches inland in bare undulating folds towards the tree-shaded Sweet Waters of Europe, at the head of the Golden Horn. Across the water one catches a glimpse of the pretty little village of Eyub whose sacred mosque no Christian may enter: farther down, encircled by their ancient walls, the seven hills of Stamboul, each crowned with its mosque and minarets, stand up against the skyline.

Here and there a dark grove of cypresses, the Turkish funereal tree, indicates a Moslem cemetery. Under their gloomy shade the white marble tombstones, roughly shaped to represent the human form, look like ghosts: those of the men's graves are topped with a carved turban, and those of the women with a lotus-leaf surmounted by a knob.

Conspicuous at the end of the Pera ridge is Galata Tower, originally built as a fire lookout post: during the Allied occupation it was used as a military telephone exchange and signal tower. Steep, narrow—and it must be admitted, decidedly smelly—streets lead down from the end of the Grande Rue de Pera to Galata, situated on the point between the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. Galata is the commercial quarter of the city, for here are the banks and shipping offices, warehouses and wharves.

From the point Galata Bridge crosses the Golden Horn to Stamboul. Below the bridge, off Tophani, lie the weather-worn cargo-steamers of many nations. Above the bridge scores of caiques huddle together, stern on to the wharf, their slender masts and sweeping yards like a forest

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of branches against the background of mosques and minarets of Stamboul. Their narrow gang-planks sway rhythmically under the weight of their crews as they pass between ship and shore, loading or unloading cargo.

All day long a kaleidoscopic crowd surges to and fro across Galata Bridge: they are a cosmopolitan lot, for here the East meets and mingles with the West. Anatolians, Kurds, Armenians, and Persians rub shoulders with Greeks, Bulgars, Rumanians, and Jews of all countries.

Amid this motley throng the modern Turk in European clothes looks strangely out of place. How much more picturesque the old-fashioned Turk looked, shuffling along in heelless slippers, fez, and baggy trousers! Now, under the Republican *régime*, even the modest *yashmak* of the Turkish women is more and more rarely seen.

In contrast between the old and the new one would see an Army motor-lorry checked in its thundering haste across the bridge by a drove of laden camels, led by a diminutive donkey in charge of a small Turkish urchin: their leisurely gait and supercilious expressions seemed to signify the contempt of the East for the hurry and bustle of the West. As unhurried as the camel-train comes a human beast of burden in the shape of a *hamal*, the Turkish porter, bent nearly double under some such stupendous load as a piano, which he carries in a sort of saddle on his back: he staggers along with his eyes on the ground, scattering the passers-by to left and right as he

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goes. Amid the prevailing red of the fez one notices the vivid flash of colour of a *hadji*, the green turban worn only by those Moslem priests who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca. A Greek priest may also pass by, tall and dignified in long black cassock, with his symbolically uncut hair made up in a "bun" behind under his quaint tall hat.

Superstition probably plays as great a part in the religious life of the Turk as do their priests and the Koran. As a charm against the Evil Eye, for instance, one often sees a Turkish child wearing a string of blue beads round its neck: many of the horses and buffaloes, too, are adorned with these necklaces. To admire a Turkish child —solemn little things they are—is to bring down the wrath of the mother upon your head. Rather should you say, "What an ugly little brat!" for superstition credits such a remark with further power to ward off the Evil Eye.

In the cool shade of the lovely little Validé mosque at the Stamboul end of Galata Bridge the crowd melts away into the crooked cobbled streets like rabbits into a warren. One of these winding burrows leads to the Bazaars which, in their underground meanderings, maintain the illusion of the rabbit-warren. The narrow alleys are roofed over with brick arches, and a feeble daylight filters down through small glass windows overhead. Their dinginess is further illuminated by such picturesque names as "The Street of Amber" or "The Street of Spices." On either side of these uneven cobbled ways are the shops and stalls of the merchants, Turks, Greeks, and

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Armenians, who stand in their doorways "seeking whom they may devour" among passing tourists. They are not content to stand there telling you how beautiful and cheap their goods are, but will follow you along and seize your arm in their efforts to persuade you to come in and buy.

A bewildering assortment of merchandise overflows from the little shops into the street; Persian carpets, prayer-rugs, beautiful octagonal tables inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl; hookahs, bizarre-looking jewellery and amber; sweetmeats, and especially Turkish delight; embroidery of all sorts and colours which one can watch being made, hundreds of pairs of Turkish slippers—the list and choice is endless. And, if their owners may be believed, all "Ver' cheap."

With a friend I spent an afternoon in the Bazaars. It was not long before we were lured into a little shop, but a few yards square, with a low vaulted roof, full of Oriental rugs and other curios. The rascally old Turk into whose clutches we had, not unwillingly, fallen welcomed us with outspread arms and a beaming smile, and signed to us to be seated on a pile of carpets and cushions. He disappeared into a dim recess at the back, and after a while returned with two cups of thick sweet Turkish coffee. The Turk generally takes a glass of cold water with his coffee, and sometimes it is accompanied by a sticky-sweet concoction of honey and rose-leaves known as rose-leaf jam.

With these ingratiating preliminaries the campaign of higgle and haggle began, and continued without intermission for a full hour. As a result of that experience I learnt that the art

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of bargaining consists in the Turk asking twice as much as he expects to get, and your offering half as much as you intend to give. The resultant compromise is generally satisfactory to both parties, for you go away feeling you have got a bargain, and he is quite sure you have not.

When we left my friend had secured a real bargain in the shape of a valuable fur coat which had once belonged to a poor Russian refugee. I had given £6 for a Bokhara rug, and it was not until my return to England, when I saw a similar rug to my "bargain" on sale at Barker's at half the price I had paid, that I realized what a bargain it was—for the Turk.

Beside the Bazaars there remains another relic of the Byzantine age in the great underground cistern of Bin-bir-derek, part of an extensive system of water conduits, both above and below ground, connected with the ancient aqueduct from Buyukdere. The name of this particular cistern suggests that it originally had a thousand-and-one pillars, though now barely two hundred are left. A visit to it gives one the unusual experience of being afloat underground, though in hardly enough water to float the boat.

Emerging from subterranean Stamboul, one wends one's way upwards through quiet side streets where latticed harem windows look down with an air of mystery, and where plashing fountains play refreshing music in shady corners. At the top of the hill, the first of the seven hills of Stamboul, is the famous mosque of Santa Sophia, with the smaller mosque of Sultan Achmed close by. Between them lies the Atmeidan, the ancient

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Hippodrome, where may be seen the sixty-foot-high obelisk of Theodosius, covered with hieroglyphics, which was brought by Constantine from Egypt. There, too, is the Platæan column of three snakes from Delphi, and recent excavations (1927) have brought to light further records of a bygone age.

Of the four hundred or more mosques in Stamboul that of St. Sophia is the finest. Originally founded by Constantine in A.D. 532 it was subsequently rebuilt by the Emperor Justinian, and has remained unchanged for 1300 years. It was at one time used as a Christian church. In outward appearance it is not so prepossessing as the adjacent mosque of Sultan Achmed with its six minarets. Not until one is inside, standing in the middle of a very sea of carpet under that great dome, does one realize its vastness. A hundred-and-eighty feet overhead, and more than a hundred feet across, the dome is supported by four sweeping arches, in the angles of which are four winged seraphim. Round the rim of the dome are forty windows, and the gallery which encircles it, itself over a hundred feet above, rests upon marble pillars, many of which are of porphyry or green jasper. The surrounding walls are covered with beautiful mosaics, and here and there are huge green plaques inscribed with quotations from the Koran in golden Arabic characters.

High up on one of the larger pillars can be seen the mark of a bloody hand of which a curious story is told. When Constantinople was captured by the Turks the Greeks fled from their pursuers to take refuge in St. Sophia, where a

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terrible slaughter took place. Astride his horse, Mohammed the Conqueror mounted upon a pile of bodies of the slain, and placing his blood-stained hand upon this pillar, bade the slaughter cease. The officiating Greek priest disappeared with the Host through the back of the altar, not to be seen again until St. Sophia once more becomes a Christian church.

Among the scattered figures, prostrate at their devotions on the carpeted floor, one had the feeling of being an intruder. And when, on leaving, the large loose slippers which had covered one's shoes were discarded, it was to emerge into the sunshine of a workaday world with the knowledge of having trodden upon the holy ground of an alien faith.

Below Santa Sophia, on the point which juts out into the Sea of Marmora, stands the Seraglio, built by Mohammed II as the palace of the Ottoman Sultans. This promontory was the site of ancient Byzantium and its Acropolis, the centre of the Byzantine empire. Though the Seraglio was not ordinarily open to visitors, through the kindness of a Turkish naval officer several of us were able to see over it one afternoon. Historically it is undoubtedly the most interesting part of Constantinople, but the short time available prevented our gaining more than a passing impression of its story.

Around the palace are terraced gardens planted with cypress and plane-trees, where fountains play among rose-gardens, and lovely little marble kiosks are found in unexpected places. From the terrace in front of the main building is a wonderful

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view up the Bosphorus: on the one side, across the Golden Horn, lies Pera, and over on the Asiatic shore is Scutari, with the distant wooded Princes Islands away to the southward across the sparkling waters of the Sea of Marmora.

Within the Seraglio walls have been enacted, in bygone centuries, the most barbaric scenes of cruelty. Innocent victims of the whim of a despotic Sultan have been garrotted or slowly tortured to death, and the unobtrusive disappearance of a Grand Vizir—probably poisoned, and his body put in a sack and quietly slipped into the Bosphorus—would have caused little comment. Many a Sultan, too, must have suffered a like fate at the hands of an ambitious rival. The knowledge of these dark deeds remains in the memory as a sinister impression underlying all that there is of charm and beauty in the Seraglio.

After a fortnight at Constantinople, the services of our flotilla being no longer required in Turkish waters, we sailed for England on November 2, almost exactly a year before the official date of the founding of the Turkish Republic. In brilliant moonlight, with scarcely a breath of air stirring, the flotilla passed through the Dardanelles that night, and after spending two days at Malta and Gibraltar, reached Portland on the 17th. A week later *Spenser* arrived at Portsmouth, and the other destroyers at their home ports for Christmas leave.

. . . . .

New Year's Day 1923 found us re-assembled with the Atlantic Fleet at Portland preparatory to the Spring Cruise. This year, however, we were to

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remain in home waters as "stand-by" flotilla, one division of four of our destroyers having already been sent over to Ireland to guard against Sein Fein disturbances.

When the Fleet sailed on January 10 we accompanied them on a strategical exercise *en route* to Spanish ports. The Bay lived up to its evil reputation: it was rough and wet, and we pitched and rolled and wallowed for two days. Parting company with the Fleet within sight of the Spanish coast, we returned to Portland in a smooth, calm sea. A few days later we left for Port Edgar, which was to be our base for the next few weeks. On her way up Channel *Spenser* carried out a full-speed trial which blistered the paint on the funnels, greatly to the wrath of the First Lieutenant. Off Flamborough Head we ran into a northerly gale, and were nearly hove-to for several hours. Port Edgar was eventually reached on the 21st.

The rest of January and all February were spent alongside in the Pens, generally under dripping, rain-soaked awnings, with occasional excursions into the Firth of Forth for gunnery or torpedo exercises. On board, I was fully occupied with the final tests of "8H," which were successful. Ashore we played squash-rackets, or golf on the rain-sodden courses round Edinburgh. When it was too wet even for that there was always consolation to be found up in Edinburgh with Mackie's scones, or with stout and oysters at the Café Royal.

An invitation which I received to St. Andrew's Boat Club fancy-dress ball gave me an amus-

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ing, though somewhat embarrassing, evening. Together with the girl who was to be my partner I had been invited to dine before the dance with our host and hostess, whom I had never met. In my great-grandfather's Georgian court-dress I was driven to the house for dinner. When the taxi stopped in front of a dark, deserted-looking doorway where I got no answer to my repeated rings and knocks, I began to suspect that I had mistaken the number. At that moment I noticed a party in fancy-dress going into a house a few doors away: this seemed to confirm my suspicions, so, paying off my taxi, I followed them in. Mentioning my hostess' name and my own to the maid at the door, I was shown upstairs to the drawing-room, where I was greeted by my unknown hostess and others of her dinner-party in fancy-dress. It is embarrassing enough at the best of times to dine at a house where you know nobody: in fancy-dress it was even more so, especially as my partner had not yet arrived to introduce me. However, I made myself known, and we stood and talked round the fire until the daughter of the house came in. She gave me a curious look and, after an awkward pause, suddenly said, "I don't think you belong here. Who are you dining with?" When I mentioned the name of my hostess I was kindly but firmly informed that she lived across the other side of the road. The taxi-driver had brought me to the right numbered house, but to the "Terrace" instead of the "Place," which were on opposite sides of the same street.

Amid much good-natured laughter I beat a

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hasty retreat, and arrived at my rightful destination a quarter of an hour late for dinner, an added embarrassment to being in fancy-dress.

The dance proved a great success, and lasted from 10 p.m. until six o'clock in the morning, when we finished up with a meal of beer and devilled bones. That same morning I had to go with my Captain (D.) to inspect one of our destroyers, my part in the inspection being to examine and ask intelligent questions about her signal and wireless equipment—this when I could hardly keep my eyes open after dancing all night.

On March 1 we left Port Edgar for Portland to continue such spasmodic flotilla exercises as the bad weather would allow. A few days after we got there came a message from the Admiralty ordering two of our destroyers to proceed to Holyhead for wireless experiments, and their commanding-officers to report at the Admiralty for instructions. As flotilla signal-officer these experiments would concern me, so, with Captain (D.)'s permission, I went up to London, met the two destroyer captains, and reported at the Admiralty. Here I was told that I should not be required, and the orders given to the other two officers were secret. Somewhat mystified, and not a little piqued, I returned to the *Spenser* at Portland.

It was not until some days later when our two destroyers returned that we learned that the "wireless" experiments they had been called upon to do had consisted in bringing over from Ireland, under close arrest, certain notorious Sein Feiners. Though there had been no wireless

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experiments for me to do, my trip to London had not been entirely wasted, for I had managed to put in two dinner-parties, a dance, and a theatre.

On April 2 we sailed to meet the Atlantic Fleet on their return from the Spring Cruise. Early next morning, on the way up Channel, the Fleet was attacked by submarines and torpedo-carrying aircraft. On completion of this exercise all ships dispersed to their home ports for Easter leave. The destroyers picked up the torpedoes, and *Spenser* arrived at Portsmouth in the evening.

Back in the dockyard with a month ahead of us before the ship would again go to sea, "Old Faithful" was once more commissioned. This, it should be explained, was the name given to an aged motor-car of some seventeen summers which had had a succession of different owners in Portsmouth. Now B——, one of our officers, belonged to it. "Old Faithful" had one enormous cylinder under her bonnet, and a strictly vertical steering column festooned with various rusty levers which took the place of the usual gear-lever and pedal controls.

Preparations for getting under way were usually very prolonged. After several minutes' strenuous work at the starting-handle the engine remained as lifeless as before. The remedy was to give it a liberal drink of petrol through a large stop-cock in the top of the cylinder. For this purpose—and the engine seemed possessed of an unquenchable thirst—B—— kept a soda-water bottle full of petrol beside him in the driving-seat. At last, after a number of deafening explosions,

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the engine would waken into life and, the whole body and chassis vibrating violently, B—— would perch himself on the ridiculous high seat behind the driving-wheel. With a clattering and screeching of gears "Old Faithful" would suddenly shoot forward a few yards, and then stop dead. The doping process with the soda-water bottle would then be repeated until she made up her mind to go.

Going out through the main gate of the dockyard one day "Old Faithful" had a mishap. It is usually only necessary to open one half of the big gates to allow traffic to pass through, but on this occasion the police, seeing (and hearing) "Old Faithful" approaching, opened both gates wide, and lined up on either side to see the fun. Nor were they disappointed. Just as "Old Faithful" was passing through the gates a gust of wind from behind blew the hood over B——'s head. He was so completely eclipsed that he ran into a horse and cart which were at that moment entering the dockyard.

The day arrived when B—— took "Old Faithful" away on leave. It was a great event for her to leave Portsmouth at all, but on this occasion he was optimistic enough to expect to reach his friends' house forty miles away. They were glad to hear that he was bringing his "car," as their own Rolls-Royce was under repair. To the usual explosive accompaniment "Old Faithful" left the ship, and some hours later came a laconic telegram from B—— at Salisbury:—

"Course West, fifteen knots."

There let us leave "Old Faithful," still steering west at that breakneck speed.

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By now my time in the *Spenser* was at an end, for my appointment as Flag-Lieutenant in the *Revenge* had arrived. I left on May 1, and joined my new ship at Devonport the same day.

Looking back, that year and a half with a job of my own in charge of the signals and wireless of the flotilla-leader and eight destroyers of the Second Flotilla was the most interesting period of my service in the Navy.

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CHAPTER IX

H.M.S. *REVENGE*, 1923–1924

"ADMIRAL wants you, sir."

It is the Admiral's orderly at my cabin door. The Admiral wants something. He may need a wardroom officer to make up a four at Bridge; he may wish to express to the officer-of-the-watch his wrathful disapproval of the noise a busy sailor is making above his head; or he may require to make a signal to the ships of the squadron under his command. Anyhow, he wants something, and the Flag-Lieutenant will see about it.

"Flags" is the messenger of the gods in a flagship, and carries a badge of office corresponding to Mercury's caduceus, his telescope the staff and his aiguillettes the twined snake. If his feet are not winged they should be.

The Rear-Admiral's flag was hoisted at Devonport on the morning of May 3, 1923, and was saluted by his flagship *Revenge* with seventeen guns. On that day he assumed command of the Second Division of the First Battle Squadron, Atlantic Fleet, consisting of the battleships *Revenge*, *Ramillies*, *Resolution* and *Royal Sovereign*. Built during the War, these ships were of 25,750 tons, and carried a main armament of eight 15-inch guns in four twin turrets, a secondary

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armament of fourteen 6-inch guns, and two 3-inch anti-aircraft guns.

The Admiral's personal staff, comprising the Flag-Captain in command of the *Revenge*, with the Secretary and Flag-Lieutenant, messed together in the Admiral's cabin. Other staff-officers of the gunnery, torpedo, navigation, and wireless branches messed in the wardroom.

Of the Admiral's retinue his coxswain, valet, steward, and orderly each played his part as much in the Flag-Lieutenant's scheme of life as in the Admiral's. The coxswain, a petty-officer, steered the Admiral's barge, which it was his duty to keep in a state of spotless beauty. If the brass funnel and other fittings, and the enamel paintwork were not all that they should be the Flag-Lieutenant heard about it from the Admiral, the coxswain heard about if from the Flag-Lieutenant, and the barge's crew heard about it from the coxswain.

The valet and steward, as mental weather-gauges in close touch with the Admiral in the seclusion of his cabin, were both valuable allies of the Flag-Lieutenant: the steward could always be trusted to know whether the Admiral had enjoyed his breakfast—or not.

The orderlies, already mentioned in their rôle of Chief Disturbers of the Flag-Lieutenant's Peace, were also the watchdogs on guard, night and day, outside the Admiral's cabin-door.

Such is an Admiral's *entourage* amid which, as "Flags" and signal-officer, I was to spend the last year of my service in the Royal Navy. Apart from my social duties as Flag-Lieutenant I was responsible as signal-officer for the visual signalling

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of the four battleships of the Second Division: the wireless communications were in charge of another staff-officer. Every signal received in the ship passed through my hands, and such as were necessary I showed to the Admiral personally. The business of sending and receiving signals was done by my staff of about thirty signalmen on the bridge, and all messages were sorted, logged, and distributed from an office below the bridge known as the D.O. to which my cabin was connected by telephone.

All telephones are convenient nuisances, and the two in my cabin were no exception. They were convenient in that they saved me a long walk and climb to the signal-bridge, but when, in the middle of the night, a sleepy exchange-watch-keeper made a wrong connection, and the telephone woke me up to hear a raucous voice which wanted to know if I were the starboard engine-room, they were a decided nuisance. For all that, their harsh buzz was no more to be ignored than was the incessant "Signal, sir" with which the bridge-messengers and signalmen pursued me round the ship all day and half the night.

Codes and coffee may seem to have as little to do with a Flag-Lieutenant's job as cabbages and kings; but his duties are manifold. In my cabin was a steel safe containing the Admiral's signal-books and codes, and the responsibility for their safe custody was mine. Twice daily, too, after lunch and dinner in the "cuddy," I officiated at the coffee table—"One lump, no milk, and don't spill any in the saucer," was the Admiral's prescription.

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In the same alliterative category as codes and coffee came calls; and calling meant visiting-cards and best clothes in the shape of frock-coat and sword with white kid gloves. We had a good deal of this before *Revenge* left Devonport. First there was the Rear-Admiral's official call on the Commander-in-Chief and, on it being returned, the ceremony of his reception on board with guard and band. There were further calls upon, and returning the calls of, Flag-officers and Captains of ships in the port. Wardroom officers, too, came to pay their respects to the Rear-Admiral, and for all callers we kept a visitors' book in which they wrote their names. The higher the rank of the officer visiting the Admiral the greater was the ceremony observed: the more senior officers were received by the Admiral himself at the head of the gangway, while it was my duty to meet all others and take them down to his cabin.

With such official functions, besides a dinner-party and dance at Admiralty House, several luncheon-parties and a very successful afternoon dance on board, we made our *début* as a new flagship. On the 21st *Revenge* sailed for Portland to join the remaining three battleships of our division, and other units of the Atlantic Fleet.

During the following month we were occupied with various exercises at sea, including a firing at the old converted target-battleship *Agamemnon*. Denuded of her guns, stripped of everything of value, and rendered as unsinkable as it was possible to make her, the "*Aggie*" steamed about and altered course and speed without a single living

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person on board. Her movements were controlled by wireless from an attendant destroyer. Several practice attacks were also made on our squadron by torpedo-carrying aeroplanes which came swooping down upon us in the eye of the sun at over 100 miles an hour.

Interspersed with this more serious side of our work were the usual calls to be paid and returned, as well as a number of luncheon- and dinner-parties on board. At luncheon one day it was interesting to meet H.M.'s younger son Prince George, together with the two Princesses Theodora and Margarita of Greece whom the Admiral entertained at his table. On these occasions his cook was wont to build the most elaborate castles of wafers and sponge-cakes filled with fruit and cream. It was quite an embarrassment to the first of our guests to whom this edifice was offered to be obliged to break down the cunningly constructed walls, doors, windows, and chimneys in order to reach the good things inside.

On June 25 the Fleet left Portland and, following an afternoon of tactical exercises, separated to pay visits to various seaside resorts. While some ships went to Bournemouth and Eastbourne, *Revenge* and *Ramillies* anchored off Folkestone after dark that evening. The Mayor and Town Clerk paid their official call on the Admiral the next morning, and shortly afterwards we landed to return it at the Town Hall. A huge Mayoral banquet and dance at the Hotel Metropole was the chief official entertainment, and we were then free to take advantage of the kindness and

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hospitality of leading residents of the town who had made us honorary members of the golf and tennis-clubs. *Revenge* gave a *thé dansant* on board, and the Mayor and senior officers commanding at Shorncliffe Camp lunched with the Admiral. One ship was open to visitors on each of the three days of our stay, and a large number came on board.

Our next visit was to Margate, where we spent a further three days showing ourselves to the British public. In spite of being anchored two miles from the pier, over 2,000 trippers came on board on Sunday afternoon. There were the usual official functions, and we left on July 3 to join the First Battle Squadron at sea.

On passage north the squadron carried out officer-of-the-watch manœuvres. In these the O.O.W.—probably a lieutenant—takes charge in each ship, and gives such orders to the helm and engines as are necessary to execute the manœuvre ordered by signal, the captain only intervening to avoid accident. A diversion in the dog-watches each day was to stop engines, and send away the racing-boats' crews for exercise.

We reached Rosyth on the 5th, and *Revenge* went into dry-dock next morning. A portion of the Swedish Fleet arrived on a two days' visit, and was entertained by our Fleet.

On the 11th His Majesty held a garden-party at Holyrood Palace to which a number of officers, myself included, were commanded. It was a perfect summer afternoon. Towering in the background, King Arthur's Seat looked down upon historic Holyrood with its smooth, green, sunlit

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lawns where Their Majesties' guests were assembled. The Royal party moved slowly among them, often stopping to have one or another of their guests presented to them. Conspicuous among the bright summer dresses of the ladies and the more sombre black and top-hats of the gentlemen were the picturesque green-feathered bonnets and bows and arrows of the officers of the King's Bodyguard of Royal Archers. It was a brave scene in a brilliant setting.

Revenge undocked on August 2, and sailed next day for Devonport to refit and give summer leave. On passage south the ship was stopped one afternoon for the officers and men to bathe. This is an event of rare occurrence in the North Sea, though one frequently practised on a foreign station: to stop ship in mid-Atlantic and dive overboard into water several miles deep is a unique experience.

During August I spent nearly three weeks' leave in Switzerland and Belgium. In a Swiss mountain hotel the following notice had been put up by the management:—

"C'est défendu de circuler en bottes d'ascension avant huit heures du matin."

Underneath was proudly written its literal translation into English:

"It is defended to circulate in boots of ascension before eight hours of the morning."

I spent one night at Gornergrat, above Zermatt, more than 10,000 feet above sea-level. Up at that height, in the cold rare air, it was like being in another world. All around were the snow- and ice-clad giants of the Alps, Monte Rosa,

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the Breithorn, the Matterhorn, and the Weisshorn. A sheer thousand feet below ran one huge moraine fed by a number of ice-blue glaciers. A stormy sunset sky whose clouds were reft by the angry yellow shafts of the sinking sun gave place to a clear and cloudless dawn, when the great rocky tooth of the Matterhorn was painted a rosy pink.

Spending the last few days of my leave on the Belgian coast, I visited Zeebrugge Mole, the scene of that immortal exploit on St. George's Day, 1918. I was also able to make a short tour of some of the battlefields, and passed through Dixmude, Poelcapelle, and Ypres—names which will live in the memory long after the horrors of the Great War have been forgotten. Few signs of war remained then, and one was more impressed with the wonderful progress made in rebuilding whole towns and villages which, at the time of the Armistice, had been little more than heaps of brick and stone.

On return from leave I found that *Revenge's* refit would not be finished in time for her to sail at the end of the month to join the rest of the Atlantic Fleet at Invergordon for the autumn practices. It had been arranged, therefore, that the Rear-Admiral should shift his flag to the *Valiant*, in which, owing to the absence of the Vice-Admiral, he would command the whole of the First Battle Squadron instead of only his own division of four ships. When his flag was hoisted in the *Valiant* on August 31 certain of his staff, including the Gunnery-Commander, Secretary, and myself, accompanied him. So in addition to

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my usual duties I was now also in charge of the wireless communications of the six battleships.

With *Warspite* in company we sailed for Invergordon, where we arrived on September 3. Just outside the harbour entrance a man fell overboard from the *Warspite*, but was rescued by one of her Royal Marine sergeants who pluckily dived overboard after him, both being picked up by one of the battleship's seaboats.

For the next six weeks the Atlantic Fleet was based on Invergordon, squadrons and flotillas carrying out their various gunnery and torpedo firings independently. We were out from Monday to Friday each week, anchoring under the lee of the land off Tarbetness, Golspie, or elsewhere in the Dornoch Forth, and only returning to Invergordon for the week-ends.

The first week of this routine was the busiest time I have ever had in all my twelve years at sea, but the work was intensely interesting. One factor, more than any other, which nearly doubled the amount of work—particularly staff-work—to be done was that fickle jade the weather. Detailed orders in writing would have been circulated for a certain practice, and every ship concerned would know exactly what to do and when to do it. Then the weather would take a hand in the game: it would come on to blow, necessitating the modification or postponement of the practice. All the carefully prepared orders were useless, and every detail had to be reorganized, generally in the shortest space of time, by signal. As often as not this happened just as I was thinking of going to bed, with the result that I was up most of the

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night making and receiving signals by half a dozen different lines of communication to as many different authorities, ranging from an Admiral commanding a battle-squadron to a Flight-Lieutenant in command of an aircraft co-operation unit. By the time all the signals had gone through there was little time left for sleep if, as usually happened, we got under way in the early hours of the morning.

On September 10 *Revenge* rejoined the Fleet, and we returned to her, not without regret, for the captain and officers of the *Valiant* had made our stay of ten days in their ship a very pleasant one. The practices continued under easier conditions for me at any rate, though the weather was as tiresome—my Admiral's word for it—as ever. The demerits of a gunnery practice as opposed to a torpedo practice were often discussed in the wardroom. While most of us agreed that they were both a necessary nuisance, one school of thought held that the discharge of 15-inch and 6-inch guns was a "disgusting shindy" compared to the noiseless discharge of torpedoes: their opponents countered by remarking that, anyway, once a shell was fired it had not to be searched for and picked up again as had "those pestilential mouldies."

A squadron night-action practice, firing the 15-inch and 6-inch guns, is a stirring experience. In line-ahead, without a light showing, the battleships steam into the pitch darkness of a night as black as themselves. Only in the gun-control positions below, aloft, and on the bridge faint glimmers of blue light at the fire-control

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instruments show the shadowy figures of officers and men at their action stations. At the fore end of the bridge, his face lit by the light shining up from the compass, is the navigating-officer, bending over the binnacle, taking bearings of a winking shore light.

Somewhere in the darkness ahead is the "enemy"—nothing more realistic than a target towed by a sloop; and looking over the bridge screens there can just be seen two pairs of great grim 15-inch gun-muzzles moving threateningly round as if seeking their prey, in obedience to electrical pointers controlled by a gunner perched up the mast in the director-tower.

The sound of the wind and sea is broken now and then by voices passing orders through voice-pipes and telephones, and by the hiss of a hundred-million candle-power searchlight burning unseen behind its light-proof shutter.

Inside the gun-turrets each huge gun has been loaded with its ton-weight shell and lyddite charges. The great steel breech, polished and shining in the glare of the electric lights, is closed, and the gun moves slowly up and down, and the turret trains round to a wheezy accompaniment of hydraulic machinery. Each number of the gun's crew is at his station, fingering his polished wheel or lever, waiting for the order to bring the gun to the "Ready." Throughout the ship is a tense air of expectancy, the calm before the storm.

Up on the bridge again the navigator is busier than ever at his compass, taking bearings and plotting them on his chart. The ship is nearly in position, and the "enemy" may be

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sighted at any moment. A sudden shout, "Alarm Green 40!" is followed by the Captain's order, "Open fire!" Within a few seconds the darkness is stabbed by a flash, and the stillness broken by the crash of one of the smaller guns which has fired a star-shell. In quick succession the star-shells follow one another, bursting high in the air on the starboard bow in a flood of brilliant light which illuminates the sea and low-lying clouds. In this radiance appears the dark shape of the target, and as the searchlights switch on and pick it up there comes a blazing, blinding, yellow-red flash, a scorching blast of hot air and pungent cordite fumes bangs one in the face, and the bridge rocks under one's feet. The first salvo of five 15-inch guns has been fired.

Within a few seconds comes the crash and roar of another salvo, the brown smoke of which drifts across the white beams of the searchlights, momentarily obscuring the target. For several minutes pandemonium reigns: salvo upon salvo thunders forth, shaking the ship from stem to stern, and almost numbing the senses of sight and hearing. The sounding of the "Cease fire" brings relief to the tension, and the dispassionate voice of a bored sailor is heard to remark:

"'Ere, Bill, wot was that you was syin' when we was interrupted abaht the barmaid at the 'Blue Cow'?"

By way of relaxation during our week-ends in harbour we played golf at Nigg or Tain, or went for long country tramps ending in sumptuous farmhouse teas of eggs and scones. The Northern Meeting was held at Inverness on the 20th and

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21st, and the Admiral and I went to stay with friends for the Highland games and the two nights of the Ball which followed them. This Ball was a brilliant affair: an eightsome reel, danced as it was there by descendants of Highland chieftains in bright tartan kilts, to the stirring music of the pipes, was a grand sight. The epaulettes and gold-laced trousers of the ball-dress uniforms of officers of the Fleet lent an added dignity and colour to the scene. Nor was the amusing side lacking either, as the following story may show.

A certain Admiral and his Flag-Lieutenant were at the Ball together. "Flags" had introduced "the old man" to one of his most charming and handsome lady friends, with whom they had each booked a dance. When the Flag-Lieutenant came to claim his dance there was the Admiral hovering by.

"Are you dancing this with Mrs. X?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered his Flag-Lieutenant firmly, "I am."

Without further remark the Admiral turned to the lady and said:

"I think the Flag-Lieutenant's feeling rather faint: *I'll* dance this with you."

And so he did—not only that dance, but many others into the small hours of the morning.

One day at the end of the month I had been invited to dinner in the *Spenser* by my old shipmates. When the second course was served I noticed that my share of fish was larger than that of any one else, due, no doubt, to my being a

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guest. The fish was fried in batter, and when I dug my fork into it I thought it seemed rather solid. I politely said nothing, however, and continued to delve under the batter covering. What I eventually found was a cardboard cylinder with glass ends, the remains of a toy telescope with which I had been presented by my messmates before I left the *Spenser* to become a Flag-Lieutenant. We had a very cheery evening which ended in the Admiral's coxswain, who had called for me in the barge, coming down to the wardroom to rescue me from my kind hosts. "I know what destroyer orficers is," he said as he bore me away.

On conclusion of the autumn practices on October 15 the Fleet sailed for Rosyth, carrying out a strategical exercise on passage. For this my Admiral was in command of the "Blue" Fleet, a circumstance which came as a practical test of the signal communications for which I was responsible. An Admiral commanding a Fleet must be able to send orders to all his squadrons and flotillas, both near and far, as quickly, secretly, and certainly as possible. However well armed with guns and torpedoes his Fleet may be, this battle-power is wasted if he is unable to use it to the best advantage. For the realization of this object his signal communications are all-important. As a naval Muse has expressed it:

"Of what avail the loaded tube,
The turret or the shell,
If flags or W/T default,
The Fleet will go to . . . ."

We remained in harbour at Rosyth until the end of October, resting from our labours of the previous month up north.

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On November 2 the Fleet assembled at Spithead to be reviewed by the Premiers of the Dominions. The following morning they steamed through the lines in H.M.S. *Princess Margaret*, a liner converted into a minelayer, and in the afternoon, while the *Princess Margaret* lay at anchor off the Nab lightship, the Fleet carried out tactical manœuvres in the vicinity for their edification. It was a grey, rainy day with a rough sea, and from what one heard afterwards of the suffering from seasickness of the Premiers while the *Princess Margaret* rocked and rolled at anchor, they can hardly have been very edified, especially as rain-squalls hid the ships from their sight most of the time.

The Fleet subsequently proceeded to Portland, and remained in harbour until the end of the month. On Armistice Day the two minutes' silence was observed in all ships with the customary ceremonial: in the *Revenge* a short service was held, for which many of the officers' wives came on board.

There was a renewed outbreak of official calls, luncheons, and dinner-parties, and among the Admiral's distinguished guests were the Dowager Marchioness of Milford Haven, Princess Andrew of Greece and her daughters, the Princesses Theodora and Margarita, Admiral de Robeck, the Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, and Lady de Robeck, as well as Lord Louis Mountbatten, one of our Lieutenants, and Lady Louis.

On November 30 the Fleet dispersed to home ports for Christmas leave, and *Revenge* lay

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alongside in Devonport dockyard until the New Year.

. . . . .

On January 4, 1924, the Atlantic Fleet assembled at Portland preparatory to the Spring Cruise. We sailed on the 10th, and on the way across to Ushant, carried out an exercise in which the battlefleet was attacked by submarines and aircraft. In the course of this submarine *L* 24 was most unfortunately rammed and sunk by the *Resolution*, our next astern. Several of us, including myself, saw her periscope appear close on our port quarter, heading for the line of ships. She dived at once, but was unable to reach a safe depth before *Resolution*, who could not possibly have avoided her, rammed her. She was sunk without trace, no survivors were picked up, nor was it possible in such deep water for salvage to be attempted. The exercise was immediately abandoned, and the battle-fleet continued its course, certain smaller ships being detailed to remain behind in the vicinity.

We crossed the Bay in heavy weather, and arrived at Vigo on the afternoon of the 13th for a ten days' visit, during most of which time it rained.

Next morning the British Consul paid his official call on the Admiral, and was saluted with seven guns on leaving the ship. The Admiral, Flag-Captain, and I landed shortly afterwards to return his call, and to pay our ceremonial visits to the Spanish Military Governor, the Mayor, and the Captain of the Port. For this purpose the authorities provided us with a red-wheeled carriage

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decked with red and blue hangings, with a cockaded coachman and footman on the box. In this we drove through the streets of Vigo, and were received with a military guard of honour and salute at the Governor's Palace. The Governor returned our call in the afternoon, and was given a thirteen-gun salute when he left. His aide-de-camp nearly fell into the water when getting into the boat, quite an unrehearsed part of the ceremony, but was rescued by one of our sailors.

The officers were made honorary members of the Tertulia Club, and various entertainments were given for both officers and men ashore. At a *thé dansant* at the Casino Club I suffered a severe rebuff at the hands of a handsome dark-eyed Spanish girl who was sitting alone in a corner of the room. After several of us had asked her to dance and had each been refused, I found out from one of our hosts that she was engaged to be married, and consequently was not allowed to dance with any one but her *fiancé*. So our chivalry, though well meant, was misplaced.

One Sunday we attended a big Mayoral luncheon-party followed by a football match between *Revenge* and Vigo. At that time football had gained considerable popularity in Spain, and every match drew huge crowds and evoked tremendous enthusiasm. At luncheon I sat next to the President of the football club, and our conversation was of football and little else. The luncheon over, we drove out to the football ground, where the Admiral was received with the British National Anthem which continued until we had taken our seats on the stand. The game

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was certainly very good, and ended in a win for the Spanish team. With more applause, band-playing, and saluting we left to finish the afternoon with another *thé dansant*. This time I carefully steered clear of any lonely Spanish maiden who looked as if she might be engaged. By the end of that day's entertainment we had had "God Save the King" played for our benefit no less than five times.

An "At Home" was held on board the *Revenge*, and the day before we left an English-born Marquesa gave a dance at her lovely castle on the outskirts of the town. For our amusement the Spanish ladies sang "Yes, we have no bananas," and finished up with "Auld Lang Syne." This was an appropriate enough ending to our stay, and we sailed for Gibraltar on the 23rd. This was to be our base for the next two months.

Except for the Spanish occupation during the eleventh century Gibraltar had belonged to the Moors from A.D. 711 for seven and a half centuries. Moorish Castle, dating from A.D. 725, remains as a relic of those days. In 1462 the Rock was retaken by Spain, who held it until it was captured by the British in 1704. It was again besieged by Spain during that century, but never recaptured: since the great siege of 1779–83 it has remained in British hands to the present day.

Gibraltar may be likened to a rocky finger sticking out into the Mediterranean from the mainland of Spain. From its tip at Europa Point the Rock runs northward for two and a-half miles in a narrow ridge some 1,400 feet high, to end abruptly at North Front in a precipitous cliff.

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Over a thousand feet below a low flat strip of ground, barely a mile from sea to sea on either side, stretches to the Spanish frontier at La Linea, a mile distant. Half-way across are the British lines, the intervening territory being neutral ground.

At North Front are the parade-ground, the racecourse, and the kennels of the well-known Calpe Hunt. From here can be seen, hundreds of feet up the sheer face of the north cliff of the Rock, the gun embrasures of its old defences. They are connected by long internal galleries, hewn out of the solid rock, which widen at intervals into spacious "halls," named the Queen's, St. George's, and Cornwallis'. In some of them still remain the old iron muzzle-loaders which used to fire across to the Spanish lines.

The only communication between Spain and Gibraltar is by the single road which comes from La Linea, across neutral ground, and enters the town at Land Port, a gate in the fortress walls on the western side of the Rock. In keeping with its character of garrison town and fortress the gates are closed at evening gunfire and, except under special circumstances, no one is allowed to pass through the lines after that hour. In this connection an old custom still survives. Every evening after sunset an armed escort with fife-and-drum band marches through the main street, carrying at its head the keys of the fortress, which are deposited at the Governor's Palace for safe custody during the night.

One of the most interesting parts of Gibraltar, and of vital importance to its existence, are the

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huge water-catchments and reservoirs. From a point above the town a tunnel, perhaps half a mile long, pierces the Rock: one can, in fact, see daylight through it from either end. A trolley-line runs along this tunnel to the great internal reservoirs which hold millions of gallons of water. They are supplied with rain-water collected on the catchments which cover a large area of the steep slopes of the eastern face of the Rock. These catchments are built up of numbers of large corrugated iron sheets: when rain falls it runs down the corrugations to a concrete water-channel along the bottom whence it flows to the reservoirs inside the Rock. Gibraltar is almost entirely dependent upon the rainfall for its water supply.

When the naval officer escapes from the confines of his ship and, as he puts it, "takes the beach," you may be pretty sure he is going to do something energetic. In the Service playing games ranks next in importance to work on board, and leave is often given to go ashore for games when it would not otherwise be granted. Small wonder, then, that every place a ship visits is judged by the facilities it affords for recreation. If no such facilities already exist, and the ship is likely to remain there for any length of time, they are provided by the ingenuity and muscular energy of her officers and men. Football grounds, golf-courses, and tennis-courts—of a sort—have sprung up from the most unlikely-looking stony wildernesses in outlandish spots where H.M. ships have been stationed, from the dismal desolation of Scapa Flow to the rocky remoteness of the Isles

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of Greece. In this respect Gibraltar, small as it is, is as well provided as most other naval bases, though the grounds are all of the hard variety, hewn out of the rock, and innocent of grass.

As a relaxation from playing games and climbing the Rock there is the Garrison Library, where one may either indulge one's literary tastes, look through the illustrated papers, or entertain friends at tea.

During the fortnight we spent at the Rock the hospitality extended to us was almost overpowering, and not least among our hospitable hosts was the Governor, General Sir Charles Monro. Our official call on him being considered paid, the Admiral and his staff and other officers received invitations to various functions at Government House, including an afternoon "At Home," a dinner-party, and a dance. We paid our official calls on the Rear-Admiral-in-charge, Gibraltar, who gave a very cheery dance at his delightful house "The Mount," and also upon the Irish Guards and "Buffs," a battalion of each of which regiments was stationed at the Rock. *Revenge* and the Buffs were old friends, as the ship had their colours on board for safe custody during the Kemalist troubles at Constantinople in 1922.

In his turn my Admiral entertained on board, and I well remember one luncheon-party of sixteen on account of my having to change the seating arrangements at the table at least three times owing to the uncertainty as to how many guests would arrive.

A levanter was blowing intermittently during our stay, and this stormy weather delayed our

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departure for twenty-four hours. When the Second Division sailed on February 11 *Ramillies* and *Resolution* went to Las Palmas, while *Revenge* and *Royal Sovereign* visited Madeira. We anchored at dusk two days later off Funchal, on the south side of the island.

There is something very provocative in arriving at an unknown place after dark, with the prospect of getting up in the morning and seeing it for the first time by daylight when one can compare the place as it is with what one thought it was like the night before. In this case one's impression was of a dark mountain mass, silhouetted against a starry sky, and pricked with the myriad lights of the town, clustered thick where their reflections danced in the placid waters of the bay, and thinning out as they climbed towards the dark mountain-tops. Among these lights was one which flashed us a private message of welcome in Morse. Daylight revealed volcanic mountains whose summits rose 6,000 feet above the sea, their upper slopes a bare grey-brown, and the lower slopes a rich green dotted with red-roofed white houses.

From 8.45 to 12.30 on the morning following our arrival was spent, both ashore and on board, in a whirl of official calls, to the usual accompaniment of gun-salutes, guards and bands, frock-coats, swords, and epaulettes. I had to go ashore about noon to bring off the Portuguese Civil Governor to return our call: as he was not on the pier when I landed I went to his Palace and fetched him. By this means we got all the ceremonial visits finished in one forenoon, and were able to go

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ashore after lunch. This, indeed, was our only afternoon free from entertainments when we had the chance of seeing anything of Funchal and its surroundings. Such was the hospitality of the English residents and visitors that we were left with no opportunity of returning their kindness at a party on board.

The Secretary and I landed after lunch with the intention of going up to the Mount, a view-point about 2,000 feet above Funchal, by the funicular railway-train which was said to leave at three o'clock. On arrival at the station we were told that there was no train at that time, and found that the next one would be too late. We were determined to get up to the Mount, so asked how much a special train would be: £5, we were told, and it would take forty minutes to get ready. We agreed upon this price, with the stipulation that for every minute beyond the forty that the train was late we would deduct a shilling. In the meantime we collected eight others to share our train and its expense.

Actually it was an hour and more before the "special" arrived, and we spent the time of waiting at the station in the light-hearted manner peculiar to young naval officers who have escaped from their ship for a few hours, and require an outlet for their high spirits. Opposite the station was a shop which sold hats of very conceivable size and shape. These we borrowed, and had our photographs taken wearing them, some in enormous sombreros about three feet across, and others in minute replicas of the larger hats. The vision of one shiny bald pate crowned by a doll's

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green sombrero, no more than three inches in diameter, was unforgettable.

After a very energetic exhibition of duelling with walking-sticks which took place on the engine-turntable our train arrived, and we boarded it. So did a number of Portuguese, but they were promptly turned off by the station-master-ticket collector-porter. We were most willing to have them, but it was not allowed, and even when one of our party went down on his knees on the platform the Portuguese official refused to relent. This was a pity, for, as six out of the ten of us occupied seats on the roofs and footboards of the carriages, and on the buffers of the engine, most of the seats were empty.

As the train climbed the hillside among sub-tropical gardens gay with roses, camellias, azaleas, mimosa, and riotous bougainvillæa, a splendid view of Funchal and its bay unfolded below us. When we reached the top, and sat having our tea on the terrace of the Monte Bello hotel, with this glorious panorama spread at our feet, we felt that our special train had been more than worth while.

We came down into the town in one of the unique "carros" for which Madeira is famous. The "carro" is a sort of basketwork sledge with wooden runners on which it slides easily over the small polished cobble-stones with which the streets and paths are paved. It is controlled by two natives who run alongside, steering by means of a rope attached to each runner in front: where the downhill slope is steep they use these ropes as brakes, and push behind when, on a gentler slope, the "carro" slackens speed. The route

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we followed down from the Mount was about six miles long, and it took us half an hour. On the more level roads of the town the "carro" is a larger form of sledge-carriage drawn by oxen.

One of the best known places ashore is Reid's Palace Hotel, set in lovely terraced gardens at the top of a steep cliff on the edge of the sea: a lift runs up this cliff for the convenience of bathers. It is a favourite resort of many tourists who spend the winter in Madeira.

An English lady gave a *thé dansant* for the officers at a bungalow in the hotel gardens, and another was given next day at the Victoria Casino. The Admiral, Flag-Captain, Secretary, and I dined at the Consulate, and again the following night with another well-known resident, who gave us some very choice and rare Madeira. These evenings generally ended with dancing and *roulette* at the Casino. With a final luncheon party for twenty on board our stay came to a close, and we sailed on the 18th for Teneriffe, in the Canary Islands, 250 miles to the southward.

Our two battleships anchored off Santa Cruz de Santiago, the capital of the Canary Islands, at nine o'clock next morning. It was here, in 1797, that Nelson lost his arm, and in the Santa Cruz church of the Conception are two British flags captured from him.

Our first forenoon was occupied with the customary interchange of visits between the Admiral and the British Consul, the Captain-General of the Canary Islands, and other Spanish notables. Next day we attended an official luncheon at the Hotel Quisisana where, for three

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hours, behind shutters closed to keep out the hot sun, we struggled through seventeen courses, and a dozen different wines. In all that time I noticed that the Captain-General, who was evidently in bad health, only had one boiled egg and a glass of milk. Lucky man! Directly the luncheon was over we returned on board, and entertained the Spanish aristocracy and their ladies at a *thé dansant* until seven o'clock in the evening.

With these functions there was little time to see much ashore, though I went up to Villa Laguna, the ancient and seemingly deserted capital of Teneriffe, five and a-half miles from Santa Cruz over a dusty road which climbs inland from the sea. What we saw of Santa Cruz and the south side of the island had none of the luxuriant vegetation of Madeira, though Orotava, on the north side of the island, was said to be worth visiting. El Teide, the extinct volcanic peak of Teneriffe, rises in a huge cone to over 12,000 feet above sea-level. Yet it was not until we had stood some miles out to sea, when we left on the 21st, that its snow-capped summit was visible. On a clear day it can often be seen as much as a hundred miles away.

A short passage of seven hours brought us to Las Palmas in Gran Canaria, which I had last seen in the *Cornwall* twelve years previously. The usual round of official calls in the forenoon following our arrival was considerably enlivened by the most excellent cocktails which the Governor provided for us. In the afternoon the British Consul kindly took several of us for a motor-drive up into the mountains. We visited the troglodyte

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dwellings at the village of Atlaya (the watch-tower), and saw the pottery made by these cave-dwellers. From Santa Brigida, where we stopped for tea, there was a magnificent view of the volcanic peaks of the island.

During the night the wind and sea rose so that it was too rough next morning for the Governor to come off to the ship to return the Admiral's call. I was sent ashore to the Consulate to get in touch with him and prevent his coming, and so came in for the wetting that he would otherwise have had. For the same reason the Admiral's luncheon-party had to be cancelled, *not* to the Flag-Lieutenant's infinite regret. It was too rough to land in the afternoon, and all boats were hoisted.

Next morning, after a three days' stay, we sailed for Gibraltar with a cargo of eighteen parrots and eighty-one canaries which the sailors had bought during the past fortnight. One forenoon the gunnery-officer took it into his head to test a 6-inch gun, and fired it unexpectedly before the owners of the birds knew of his intention. The mortality from the shock among the feathered folk was regrettable, and several of the owners were loud in their demand for their money back from the gunnery-lieutenant. However, few of the birds which survived that calamity lived to reach England six weeks later.

We had a peaceful three days at sea, met *Ramillies* and *Resolution* at a pre-arranged rendezvous, and the Second Division arrived again at Gibraltar on the morning of the 27th, to plunge forthwith into the social whirl. The Admiral gave a dinner-party on board at which the

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Governor and Lady Monro, the Commander-in-Chief and Lady de Robeck were present, and this was followed by a dance to which about three hundred guests had been invited. Other entertainments included a dance ashore at the Garrison Library, dinner with the Irish Guards, and a dance in the *Royal Sovereign*. For five successive nights I did not get to bed before one or two o'clock in the morning, and on one particular day the only meal I had which was not a "party" was breakfast. *Eheu jam satis!*

I made good my escape one afternoon, and climbed up the precipitous Mediterranean Stairs on the eastern side of the Rock. Once at the top the effort is more than repaid by the wonderful view to be seen on every side. Southwards across the Straits of Gibraltar is the dark outline of the mountains of the African coast, with the houses of Tangier, over thirty miles away, gleaming white in the sunlight. All day long, through this gateway of the Mediterranean, the ships of every nation go by. An unsleeping eye at Windmill Hill signal-station sees them and, with a fluttering hoist of flags or a winking searchlight, speaks them as they pass on their way. So does Britain, in her *rôle* of guardian of the Straits, keep watch and ward.

One's eyes sweep on round the horizon; eastwards where the blue of the sea melts imperceptibly into the blue of a cloud-flecked sky; northwards beyond La Linea and San Roque into Spain, where the grey-green hills mount upward to the snow-capped Sierra de Ronda; thence westward round the curve of the bay

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to Algeciras with its background of dark cork-woods.

Perched on this lofty eminence, almost astride the ridge, with the sea more than a thousand feet below on either side, one looks down on the busy dockyard and harbour far beneath, where a flotilla of destroyers is putting to sea. One by one they detach themselves from their berths alongside the Mole, back out stern-first with three short warning blasts on their syrens and, reversing their engines, slip out of harbour between the breakwaters, to form in line-ahead, and disappear into the reflected blaze of the westering sun.

A medley of sounds comes floating up in the hot still afternoon air. From a great grey battleship alongside is heard the shrill call of a boatswain's pipe, followed by the hoarse shout of a boat being called away. Within a few minutes a picket-boat slides up to the gangway, and flannel-clad figures are seen tumbling down into it—officers going ashore in the seven-bell boat to play tennis. Presently the bugle-call to "Evening Quarters" galvanizes to hurrying, scurrying activity the warships' decks. Men come pouring up from below to muster aft on the quarter-deck for inspection: another bugle-call sounds the "Disperse," and away they disappear below to tea. From this lofty eyrie they look like busy ants: one feels a part of, but remote from, it all.

By now the sun is nearing the horizon. At the dockyard signal-station a single flag is hoisted, to be repeated or answered by the warships in harbour. A signalman comes running down from the bridge to report, "Five minutes to sunset,

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sir," to the officer-of-the-watch on the quarter-deck. He goes on aft to the ensign-staff, loosens the halyards and lacing of the Ensign, and stands there, halyards in hand, in readiness for sunset.

The waiting silence is shattered by the report of a gun.

"Sunset, sir!"

Down come the preparative flags and answering pennants, and the echoes of the gun reverberating about the Rock mingle with the long-drawn notes of the sunset call on the bugles of half a dozen ships. With slow and stately ceremonial each White Ensign and Union Jack is hauled down, every one on deck facing aft at attention, the officers saluting. The last echoing notes of the bugles die away, the sun has set in a golden blaze, and one by one the lights appear at sea, in ships, and ashore. A chill has crept into the air, reminding one that it is time to clamber down from the heights to the more prosaic levels of thought and fact.

. . . . .

The Atlantic Fleet left Gibraltar late on March 8 for the annual strategical exercises and meeting with the Mediterranean Fleet at Pollensa Bay, Majorca. There followed a peaceful Sunday at sea before the Fleets "joined battle," and the combined forces anchored in Pollensa Bay on the afternoon of the 11th. The next three days were occupied with the usual inter-fleet pulling and sailing regattas, football and boxing-matches, dinner-parties with old shipmates, and other forms of private entertaining.

The Fleets sailed early on the 15th and carried

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out another strategical exercise before parting company. In these exercises a flagship's bridge is a scene of great activity, and is the brain-centre from which the movements of squadrons of battleships and cruisers, flotillas of destroyers and submarines, and flights of aircraft are controlled by the Admiral. His orders are transmitted by wireless to units of the Fleet which are out of visual touch, and every few minutes messages received by wireless are brought up from the decoding office below, and given to the signal-officer, who reports them to the Admiral. Communication with ships in sight is carried out by flag-signals, or powerful daylight-signalling search-lights.

Let us stow ourselves away in a corner of the bridge—out of the navigator's way, for navigators are apt to be dangerous if impeded when conning the ship—and listen to what is going on.

"Tell that cruiser over there to report if any enemy aircraft are in sight," says the Admiral to his Flag-Lieutenant.

"Flags" promptly buries his head in a voice-pipe down which he remarks, "Charlie Beer Monkey Nuts." This weird formula is repeated by a signalman on the flag-deck below, where the signalmen are standing by the flag-lockers with the halyards in their hands. Within a few seconds the four alphabetical flags named are clipped together, and go soaring up to the mast-head. The cruiser answers, and the hoist is hauled down.

"Charlie Beer Monkey Nuts" is phonetic

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alphabet signal-jargon for the flag-hoist consisting of the four alphabetical flags C, B, M, and N. It will be realized that unless some such method were used mistakes would arise between letters with the same sounding names, such as C and B, or M and N. "Uncle Isaac" and "Don Queenie" are not the Christian and surnames of individuals, though a certain signal-officer is still known to his *confrères* as "Freddy Nuts."

Many as are the combinations of Orange, Pip, King, Johnnie, Zebra, and London, the most welcome signal of all, after several hours' phonetic strategy, is that to say that the exercise is concluded.

When this particular "battle" was over the Mediterranean and Atlantic Fleets separated, the former to return to Malta, and the latter to Gibraltar.

This was to be our final visit to the Rock before returning to England, and after three days' gunnery and torpedo practices in the vicinity of Gibraltar and Tetuan Bay, nearly every night until the end of the month was occupied with one social function or another. Dances were given at "The Mount" and at Government House, and *Queen Elizabeth*, *Barham*, and *Revenge* each gave excellent theatrical performances. *Revenge's* show was given by our "Blackbirds" concert-party, and was a variety entertainment on the lines of the "Co-optimists," in which all the music, songs, and dialogue were written by two of our talented officers. All the scenery, too, was made and painted on board. It was a huge success, and was attended by the Governor, Commander-in-Chief,

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other Flag-officers, and at least five hundred invited guests.

A few days before we left a Review was held on North Front parade-ground, when five thousand officers and men of the Atlantic Fleet marched past H.E. the Governor. It was a most inspiring sight.

I cannot but admit that by now I had had more than enough of the official entertaining in which, as Flag-Lieutenant, I was obliged to take part. After a while, too, the towering mass of the Rock became oppressive, and the place altogether too small. Then was the time to take the steamer to Algeciras, five miles away across the bay. The view of Gibraltar as one looks back in the steamer's wake is very fine, and perhaps the more appreciated for having got away from the Rock for a few hours. Although there is little to attract one in Algeciras itself, a short way outside the town is the beautiful and well-known Reina Christina Hotel, where one may while away a hot afternoon in languorous laziness, basking in the sun, and having tea among the flowers and shady palms of its sub-tropical garden. After such an interlude of *dolce far niente*, remote from everything to do with the Service, one returns on board in the evening like a giant refreshed.

On the morning of April 2 the Atlantic Fleet sailed for England. Crossing the Bay of Biscay the inevitable strategical exercise took place: the battle-fleet was attacked by destroyers at intervals during a sleepless night which I spent either pacing up and down the Admiral's bridge, or trying to sleep (most uncomfortably) on a hard

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wooden bench among wireless receivers and transmitting keys. Though I did not know it at the time, that was the last Fleet exercise in which I was to take part. Before the Fleet dispersed to home ports a final submarine attack exercise was held on the morning of the 7th in the mouth of the Channel, and *Revenge* arrived at Plymouth that afternoon.

The year of the Rear-Admiral's command of the Second Division of the battle-fleet was now nearing its end. The wardroom officers gave a farewell dinner to him and his staff: after the speeches they entertained us at the piano, and among the songs they sang were several of the Admiral's more famously worded signals set to hymn tunes.

The new Rear-Admiral's flag was hoisted in the *Resolution* on the morning of May 3. A few hours later my Admiral left his flagship for the last time, and I stood with him on the jetty alongside while the sailors gathered on deck and cheered him. His flag was struck at sunset.

. . . . .

Little did I realize when, two days later, I left the *Revenge* myself that this was the end of my service in the Royal Navy, and that I had worn my uniform on board a ship of war for the last time. Yet so it was, for, before very long, I was obliged to go abroad for the sake of my health, and in August was invalided out of the Service.

There is a story of an old sailor who, when asked what he would do when he gave up the sea, replied that he would go ashore and walk into the heart of the country with an oar over his shoulder

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until he met some one who would ask him, "What is that thing you are carrying?" There he would build himself a house, and settle down to pass his declining years among pigs and poultry, as far away from the sea as possible.

This, perhaps, may be the attitude of a small minority of naval officers who have left the Navy. Few of us, however, would care to cut ourselves off entirely from our old shipmate friends, and from the naval associations among which most of us have been brought up since our early school-days. Nothing can replace the cheery companionship of messmates who have lived together for the best years of their lives, in gunroom and ward-room, sharing the difficulties and dangers of their calling. It is this *camaraderie* most of all that one misses so much after one has retired from the Service.

There are certain people only too ready to decry the Royal Navy as a profession in these days when, owing to the reduction of the Fleet and its personnel, prospects of promotion are not so good as they used to be. Admittedly there are disadvantages and drawbacks, but so there are in every profession. Yet, when all is said and done, the spirit of the Navy is as keen as it always has been, if not keener. The best type of British manhood will continue to be attracted to what, in the author's humble opinion, is the finest Service in the world—"the Navy, on which, under the good providence of God, the safety, honour, and welfare of the Kingdom do depend."

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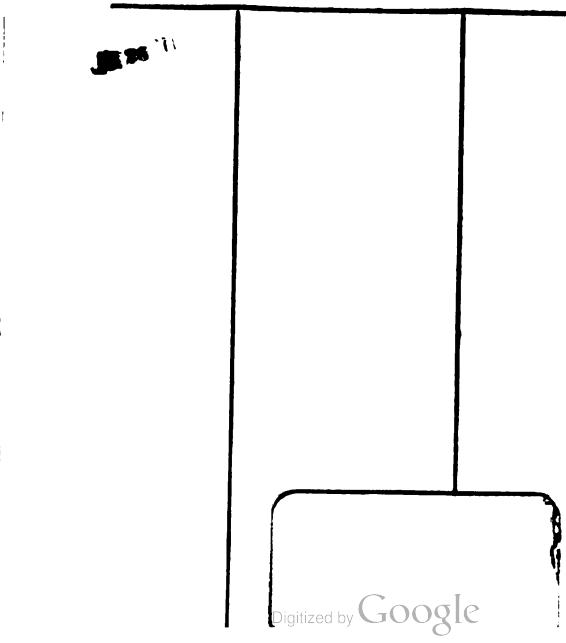

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